



BLUE AND GRAY

WEEKLY



Stories of Brave Northern and Southern Boys in the Civil War.

Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered according to Act of Congress in the year 1904 by Frank Tousey, 24 Union Square, New York.

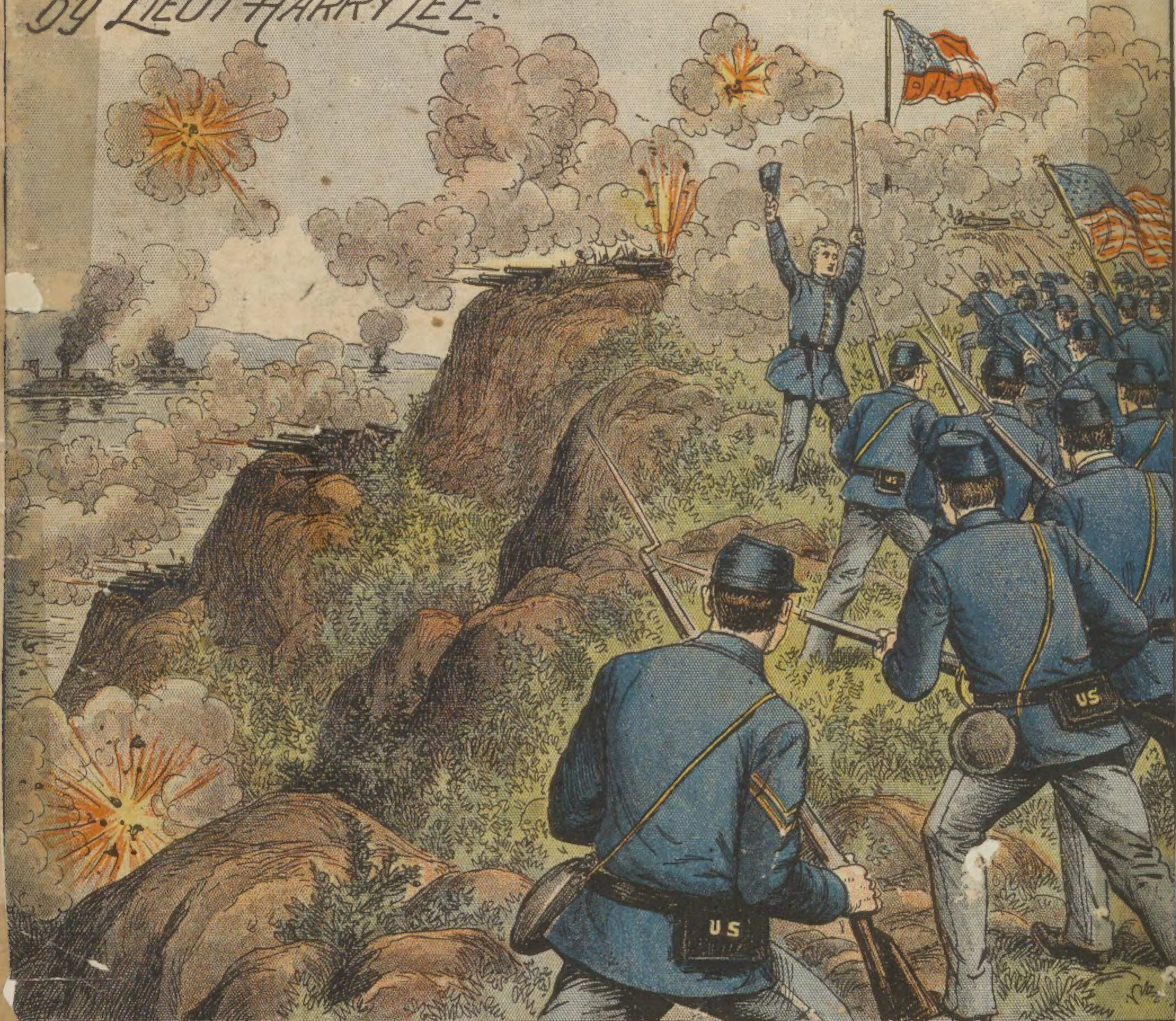
No. 13.

NEW YORK, NOVEMBER 4, 1904.

Price 5 Cents.

AT FORT DONELSON; OR, THE BOYS IN BLUE'S GREAT CHARGE.

By LIEUT HARRY LEE.



Up the steep ascent went the Fairdale Blues with Jack Clark at their head. That brilliant charge in the face of the deadly guns of the fort was never forgotten by those who saw it.

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CHAPTER I.

THE SCOUT'S WARNING.

Two miles below the town of Dover, in the State of Tennessee, the Confederates during the early part of the great Civil War between the North and the South built what was considered an utterly impregnable fortress.

It was provided with heavy guns and was built strong and safe against attack from land or water side. The Cumberland river rolled past it and craft going up the river or down must pass under the guns of Fort Donelson.

This was considered the key to the control of the Cumberland valley. Fort Henry, twelve miles away on the Tennessee, had been stormed and taken by the combined forces of Grant and Foote.

For some while after the capture of Fort Henry General Grant had remained quiet, but all the while his astute mind was at work making plans for the capture of Donelson.

Generals Floyd, Pillow and Buckner, some of the ablest of the Southern leaders, were in command.

They scoffed at the thought that Grant's forces could reduce their defenses. They deemed their fortification the strongest in the West.

But the great Union general, who like a tenacious bull-

dog, never relaxed a grip once made, did effect its capture in good time.

The incidents of this story will deal with that thrilling affair and also the adventures of a brave company of Union youths known as the Fairdale Blues.

In a certain New York town known as Fairdale there was an academy attended by a large number of youths from all parts of the State and some from beyond. Chief among the athletic leaders in the school was Jack Clark, the son of Homer Clark, a wealthy merchant of Fairdale.

Jack's chum and friend was Will Prentiss, the son of a Virginia planter and gentleman. When the war was declared these two youthful friends parted as nominally friends no longer, but foes.

For Will Prentiss went to Richmond to organize a company of Confederate youths known as the Virginia Grays. That was a hard moment for the two chums to know that they must henceforth meet only as enemies.

Jack Clark was captain of a local organization of youths known as the Fairdale Blues.

They had natty blue uniforms and up to this date obsolete muskets furnished them by the State.

In all parades or public events the Fairdale Blues participated with great effect. They were finely drilled and prided themselves upon their marching.

But when Lincoln's never-to-be-forgotten call went through the country for volunteers to defend Washington, it was a matter of course for the Blues to at once respond.

It was a proud day for them, though a sorrowful one for their friends, when they marched away to the seat of war.

At once they proceeded to distinguish themselves. Homer Clark had been an old-time friend of President Lincoln's. It was natural that the great kind-hearted President should take an interest in young Captain Clark and his Blues.

The Blues distinguished themselves greatly in the great battle of Bull Run. Thereafter they participated in some engagements about Washington until they were sent West to join the forces of Grant and McClelland.

At the capture of Fort Henry they had fought with honor. Now, as the move on Donelson was contemplated, they were ready again.

General Grant's plans to capture Fort Donelson were elaborate and made with a master hand.

Between the Cumberland and the Tennessee rivers the country was undulating, the highest hills reaching an elevation of three hundred feet.

These were covered with the primitive forest and afforded excellent cover for a fighting force. Grant's lines were enabled to advance thus with ease, until finally they were within a mile or a little more of the Confederate rifle pits. Here Grant extended his line so as to invest the fort in a crescent shape almost from river to river, the line being three miles long.

The enemy's skirmishers were driven back. The month was February, and the weather was like that of October in the North.

This in general was the state of affairs up to the 12th and 13th of February. In the interim all manner of exciting minor incidents were happening.

The Blues had been selected to go ahead on scout duty.

They were well fitted for this. As they were lightly equipped and being young and quick, they could make forced marches with ease.

So it happened that at dusk on the evening of the 13th of February, the Blues found themselves in a rocky hollow some miles below the fort.

They had experienced a sharp skirmish with a small body of Confederate troops and had driven them. They were preparing for a bivouac.

Some of the boys cut trees and improvised shelters, while others collected wood for campfires. Pickets had been posted and Jack Clark and his lieutenant Hal Martin were seated on a log eating hard tack rations and drinking brackish water.

"Well," said Lieutenant Martin, "we gave the graybacks a good chase to-day. I wonder what luck we will have to-morrow."

"We may get driven," said Jack. "Those are the chances of war."

"That is so. As long as we don't get captured it will be all right."

"Sure, but I don't anticipate that. We are not exactly

in touch with our right wing, but I think we could depend upon it for reinforcements in case of an attack."

"Ah, so do I. I say, Jack, here is something you dropped to-day when we were on the quick retreat. I picked it up and hereby return it."

Jack took the object and gave a quick start.

His eyes flashed. It was a small gold locket on a thin gold chain. The boy captain looked at Hal and said:

"Did you ever see this before?"

"No."

"Well, I will show you." He pressed a spring and the locket flew open. The face of a young girl was shown in the miniature, the most charming face Hal Martin had ever seen.

"Great Cæsar!" he exclaimed. "She is a beauty. I declare she looks familiar. Do I know her?"

"You ought to," replied Jack. "I think you have seen her many a time. Her name is Nellie Prentiss."

"The deuce!" exclaimed Hal. "Of course, I know Nell Prentiss. She is the prettiest and most charming girl I ever knew."

"Yes," agreed Jack, "she certainly is all that. But, though we were friends, we are divided now."

There was a ring of pathos in the young captain's voice. Hal looked up quickly and understood all.

"Yes, I see," said the young lieutenant. "You liked each other. You are only one of thousands who have suffered the same heart pangs."

"Nell Prentiss is one of the noblest and truest girls on earth. She is in the Confederate service as a spy. She has won great fame as such. But there can be nothing between us, Hal. I cannot go to her. My heart is loyal to the Union."

"She is making a mistake. Her principles are not safe. I am sorry for her."

"So am I," agreed Jack. "Ah, it is too bad that this war should go on. It is a great mistake, and the sinful work of unscrupulous men who are willing to sacrifice their country for political advancement and gain."

"Captain Clark!"

It was a young corporal who spoke in a quick nervous tone. In an instant Jack Clark was upon his feet.

"Well," he asked sharply, "what is it, Corporal Peters?"

"Sanders, the scout, is here and wants to see you."

"Very good. Tell him to come here."

The corporal saluted and disappeared. In a few moments he reappeared, bringing with him a man of remarkable appearance.

Sanders, the famous Union scout who had been with Grant through his Missouri campaign, was a small, wiry man, with thin face and keen ferret eyes.

He had been an Indian trailer in the far West and knew his business well.

The scout bowed before the young captain of the Blues and said:

"I have just come from Dover, Captain Clark. I have been in the Confederate lines and almost into the fort. I am on my way to see General Grant and stumbled upon

your bivouac here by chance. I know that you are on scout duty, but I don't think you realize the fact that you are at this moment in a very dangerous position."

"Indeed, Sanders," said Jack, "I can't believe that we are threatened by any great force. We had a tilt with the enemy's skirmishers a few hours ago. Our scouts report the horizon clear."

"I think you will find that it is not," said the scout. "Of course, you know General Forrest, the raider?"

"I do."

"Well, I have to tell you that he is not an hour's march from here. He has two thousand mounted men in his command, far more than you can cope with. They are well armed and carry a field battery. It is General Forrest's intention to make a dash through this region and cut off General Grant's advance guard."

"Whew!" exclaimed Jack. "That means us with the rest."

"Yes."

"I thank you very much, Sanders, for the warning. I will look out for the contingency, be sure."

"What will you do?"

"Post extra pickets and have my men sleep on their arms."

"What!" gasped the scout. "In the face of such an overwhelming force? You, a mere company? That would be suicidal. Why, they would sweep you off at one blow."

"Sanders," said Jack Clark resolutely, "you forget that we have General Grant's army back of us. We are part of his advance guard, and we are put here to advance and not retreat."

"But, policy sometimes demands that caution be used, and——"

"Not in this case. If the advance guard retreats it is a sign of weakness to the foe. If we stand our ground and are even cut off in doing it the foe are bound to believe in our strength and fear us. We are but a fraction of this great army. It is our duty, as much as the rank and file behind us, to stand our guard and die if need be. No, the Blues will not retreat."

Sanders, the scout, looked at the young captain with a burning light in his eyes.

"Captain Clark, I respect you!" he said. "You are a brave man. I sincerely hope you will be reinforced."

"I thank you, Sanders. You are positive that General Forrest is headed this way?"

"He may be here in an hour."

"Ah, then we have no time to lose."

"Pardon me, captain! What force is behind you?"

"We are some distance ahead of the army," said Jack. "Two miles behind us sappers and miners are busy building a bridge."

"They can afford you no reinforcement. Really, Clark, it would be no disgrace to fall back within calling distance of your army. This is my earnest advice."

"For which I again thank you. But we have got to hold our ground. The bridge building behind us would be destroyed by Forrest. That cannot be!"

"Very good, Captain Clark! I have given you the warning. I must now go on to General Grant's headquarters. I will acquaint him with your position and perhaps he may see fit to send you substantial aid."

"One moment, Saunders."

"Well?"

"Tell him that the Blues have chosen position and are going to stand their ground in face of any odds."

"Very good, sir."

Sanders was gone the next moment. The intrepid young captain drew a deep breath and turned to his lieutenant.

"So Forrest threatens us!" he exclaimed. "Well, we will have to fight, for he is a dashing officer. Now, Hal, see that the boys are ready for a moment's call. Then report to me. I want to choose a position for defence over yonder on that wooded hill."

CHAPTER II.

THE BATTLE IN THE DARK.

Jack Clark was in earnest in his declaration to stand his ground against Forrest.

There were several reasons why he felt sure of success.

In the first place, Forrest's force was cavalry. Now, the country was not conducive to cavalry operations. And cavalry never could fight with success on foot.

He recognized the fact that the advantage lay with Forrest so far as superior numbers went.

But the Blues must be attacked in their own position and at night. Many a subterfuge could be adopted to deceive the enemy as to their real strength.

The battery used by Forrest was the main thing to be feared. But then Hal Martin said:

"What about the battery, Jack?"

"Capture it!" said the young captain. "That is the easiest way to dispose of that."

The young lieutenant laughed and made reply:

"That is surely the right spirit. We will capture it, too."

Jack and Hal now proceeded to examine the hillside nearby. They discovered that it was a place admirably suited for defence.

In fact, it was one of those positions which a small force could defend against a larger. In a few moments Jack had decided upon the character of his defences.

He called out a detachment with axes. In a short while, by the aid of fires to enable them to see, they had felled a line of trees along the steep hillside.

On each side of the hill was a deep ravine. Behind it were the waters of a creek.

As soon as the trees were felled brush was piled over them, making a good breastwork. Then Jack sent a gang of the boys down to the creek.

In a short time several rafts were built capable of floating the whole company. For the young captain was far too

astute a commander to be caught in a trap with a river in his rear.

If the necessity for retreat should come it could be effected by means of the rafts.

So, taken all together, the Blues were quickly in readiness for a desperate battle. If Forrest should attack that night they could retire to the breastworks on the hill and make a desperate stand.

He could not surround them without crossing the creek and thus dividing his force, a most dangerous thing.

So Jack Clark felt comparatively secure. At least he felt that he had done his best to make his position extremely safe.

All that could be done now was to await events.

If Forrest should attack that night they would rush into their defences and stand their ground.

If he did not attack, well and good. In the morning they would move on and the defences could be abandoned.

It was now after midnight and no sign of the raider was seen. Jack began to believe that he would not attack at all.

The boys slept on their arms. Jack had wrapped himself up in his blanket and was just getting to sleep when the distant rattle of musketry was heard.

In an instant he was upon his feet.

"Here they come!" cried Lieutenant Martin, as he came dashing up. "We will have hot work to get into the intrenchments in time."

But Jack's cool manner and sharp orders soon straightened things out. In good order the Blues fell back to the hillside defences.

They had barely taken up their position when the bullets began to whistle over their heads.

The foe had taken up position on the other side of the ravine. They had not the advantage of elevation, but still they could keep up a hot fire.

For over an hour this lasted, when suddenly a cry went along the line:

"Here they come!"

It was true. The lines of gray, massed in the distant forests, were moving out. The critical moment had come.

If the first charge could be repelled Jack felt that they would be able to hold their ground. The numbers were against them, but the Blues had pluck.

"Steady, boys!" called the young captain. "Wait for the command! Hold your fire!"

The Blues had been formed in three lines. The first would fire into the advancing line and fall back to allow the second line to send in a volley.

This line would fall back for the third. By this time the first line would be reloaded.

By this method a continuous fire was kept up. This would be something hard for any body of troops to face. Again Jack's command went up:

"Steady, boys!"

The Blues were steady. It was not the first time they had been under fire.

They had fought desperate battles in Virginia before coming West. They were really almost veterans.

meant that they could soon make the vicinity too hot for the Blues.

But Jack Clark said:

"It is the time to act. We must do it or be defeated."

"What?" asked Hal Martin.

"We must charge. That battery must be captured!"

In an instant Hal drew his sword.

"Say the word," he cried. "I'll put the boys at it!"

Jack studied the situation a moment. It did not take him long to decide how the charge should be made.

He saw that part of the eminence opposite, where the battery was to be planted, sloped gradually to the north.

By a slight detour in the darkness the Blues could come down in a flank attack and approach the battery almost from its rear.

Quick work, a mad dash, and before the three guns of the battery could be turned, the Blues could be among the gunners.

There was a chance for success. Failure would mean disaster and utter defeat.

Jack Clark was not one to rush headlong into an enterprise. He was disposed to carefully weigh the chances and act shrewdly.

Forrest's men were advancing on foot. They had left their horses in the woods.

It is a well-known tradition that cavalry are usually a failure on foot. The reason is easily given.

Trained to evolutions in the saddle, they had not the necessary drill of the infantry. But Forrest seemed confident, for he sent his men to the attack.

Up the slope they came in rapid lines. Jack Clark waited until he deemed the right moment had arrived.

In the gloom it was not easy to distinguish the foe. But their outlines could be seen, and suddenly Jack gave the word:

"Ready, Blues! Fire!"

A sheet of flame leaped from the breastwork of logs. A second later another followed it, and then came a third.

The first volley made the line recoil a little. The next caused it to stagger. The third brought confusion.

The ground was covered with the dead and dying men. The cavalry officers yelled and raved at their men. But it was in vain.

They fell back gradually, until suddenly losing their courage they broke entirely. A rout followed.

The Blues did not pursue. They poured in volley after volley and drove the foe back across the ravine.

The repulse was effectual.

How the brave boys in Blue did cheer. Madly they shouted. The cavalymen were greatly disconcerted.

For a time Forrest's men retired and were silent. Only desultory firing ensued. The Blues were jubilant.

"We've licked them!" cried Corporal Peters. "They won't come back!"

"Don't be too sure," said Hal Martin. "Listen to that!"

There was a roar and a flash and a shell burst fifty yards away. The story was an easy one.

The Confederates had brought up their battery and this

But he really believed that it would be possible to succeed in the undertaking.

He could choose from two chances.

One was the capture of the battery. The other was a retreat across the creek. There he might be safe.

But the capture of Forrest's battery would be an achievement which would make the Blues famous. In all the Confederate service there was no man so hard to beat as Forrest.

Jack pondered but a short time.

Then he drew his sword:

"Hal," he said, "I am going to lead that attack myself. I want you and a dozen of the boys to remain here behind the breastworks and keep up a scattering fire to let them know that we haven't abandoned our position."

"All right, captain," agreed Hal. "I will do as you say."

So the Blues were ordered forward and into line for the attack. Jack placed himself at their head.

"Boys," he shouted, "we are about to undertake a very dangerous task, the capture of the enemy's battery. It will necessitate a daring charge in the dark. But I know that you will not falter. I will not ask you to go where I do not lead. Forward!"

With a cheer the brave little company set out down the hillside. In a few moments they were skirting the ravine and then they plunged into its dark depths.

In a few moments they had reached the slope and went climbing up through the trees.

Silently they crept up on the flanks of the enemy. Not anticipating an attack, as he was himself the attacking party, Forrest had established no pickets. The result was that it was an easy matter for the Blues to creep up very close to the battery before they were discovered.

A sentry first heard them coming and fired a shot.

Then Jack shouted:

"Forward, Blues! Charge bayonets!"

Forward went the daring little company. Up through the trees for fifty yards and they were in sight of the battery lights. The alarm had now been given to the gunners.

They instantly began to wheel the guns. If they should succeed one volley of grape shot would sweep the Blues back and insure their destruction.

"On, boys, on!" shouted Jack Clark.

The cavalymen had begun to rally and shots were fired. Two of the Blues dropped.

But they rushed on like a whirlwind. One of the guns was already turned, and the next moment the Blues would have got its contents. But a volley from the advance line swept away the gunners and the next moment, like an avalanche the Blues were upon the battery.

Such of the gunners as stood their ground were shot down. Others fled, and almost without a struggle the battery was captured.

There were plenty of the boys who knew how to work the guns. In an instant they had wheeled them and a roaring volley was sent across the face of the ridge.

But only a scattering few of the Confederates could be seen, greatly to Jack's amazement.

What did it mean?

The Blues deployed over the ridge. But the main body of cavalymen were gone.

The artillery horses were found and Jack thought of hauling the guns across to his own breastworks. But the next moment an explanation came.

The rattle of muskets was heard across the ravine. Sheets of flame were to be seen among the trees.

"Great Cæsar!" exclaimed Corporal Tom Peters, who had taken charge of one of the guns. "They have been playing the very game we have played, Jack. See, they have gone over to attack us on the other flank."

This was true!

It explained why so little resistance had been made in the capture of the battery. The main body of the enemy had gone to make the flank attack.

It was a curious coincidence. It had resulted in a complete change of position, with the advantage greatly in the Blues' favor, as they had the battery in their possession and could make use of it.

Of course Hal Martin recognized the situation at once and quickly fell back before the attack.

He left the trenches and retreated after Jack. The latter had sent a detachment to aid and guide him, and half an hour later he was with the Blues.

Meanwhile Forrest had seized the Blues' breastworks and were chagrined to find that they had gone. It was a stupefying revelation to Forrest that he had been sold.

He had planned shrewdly. But his plans had miscarried.

CHAPTER III.

AT THE PLANTATION.

Forrest had reckoned upon an easy victory. While his battery was driving the Union company from their breastworks he had reckoned upon turning their flank and defeating them.

But the fact that Jack had decided unwittingly upon a counter move of the same sort completely changed the situation in the favor of the Blues.

It is hardly necessary to say that Jack and his boys were elated.

They shook the night air with their cheers and instantly opened fire upon the opposite heights with Forrest's own battery.

While the shells were bursting on the opposite ridge the chagrined cavalymen, however, were not disposed to yield the game yet.

They were by no means satisfied to ease their battery without a struggle to recover it.

Jack had anticipated this.

He also knew that the superior numbers of Forrest's men might turn their victory into defeat. So very shrewdly he chose the course which a wise officer would have chosen.

There was every reason for congratulation. They had

withstood a force more than ten times their number and with honor.

They had accomplished the main object in holding Forrest from sweeping northward and harassing Grant's main army.

This was certainly enough for the time. Jack decided to fall back, or rather to go on and leave Forrest between him and the main army.

He knew that by daylight the van of the army would come up. In that case Forrest would have to withdraw.

So Jack gave the order:

"Fall in for retreat!"

"I believe if we stood our ground we could whip them, Jack," said Hal.

"Very likely," said the young captain dryly. "But that is not the whole game."

"We shall be going toward Donelson."

"That is what we want."

Hal looked at his young captain wonderingly. But he said no more.

In a few moments the Blues were falling back in good order, and carrying the captured battery with them.

For some ways they kept on through the woods.

To Jack's surprise Forrest did not pursue. He learned afterwards the reason for this.

The cavalrymen charging upon the position they had lost, found it evacuated. They at once started in pursuit, but in the darkness and the woods got off the track and went four miles at a tangent.

This disposed of Forrest and his raiders for that time.

The Blues kept on and just before daylight came to open country. A great plantation lay before them.

The planter's houses were seen on the banks of a bayou which connected some miles further on with the great Cumberland river.

The Blues were exhausted with their night's fighting.

Jack knew he was far in advance of the army, and it would be well perhaps to wait and get in touch again with the advance guard.

So he gave orders to halt.

A visit was made by the young captain and a guard of half a dozen privates to the plantation. They passed through a fence of white paling and walked up a wide path to the front door.

On the porch was an old negro with a gun.

"Hol' on dar, gemmens! Don't yo' cum dis way no fudder," he said threateningly. "Dis am Missy Blanchard's house, an' she ain' got no use fo' Yankees."

"Indeed," said Jack, with a smile. "Put up your gun, Pompey, before I order it taken from you. Where is your master?"

"Ain' got no master, sah. Only jes' got a missus!"

"Oh, this plantation belongs to one of the fair sex, eh?"

"No, sah, it jes' belongs to Missus Blanchard, an' she am de bes' young lady in de hull ob Tennessee. Yo' kin bet we niggahs is ready fo' to die fo' Missy Emily, sah."

Jack was struck with the seriousness of the negro. He looked at him sharply, and said:

"Look here, my good fellow. I want you to do me a favor."

"Kain't do it, sah. I is Missy Blanchard's niggah."

"That's all right. But it's also a favor to her."

"A'right, sah. I done do it, den."

"Just tell her that a Yankee officer, who claims to be a gentleman, begs the honor of an audience. That is, I would like to see her."

The colored man rolled his eyes.

"Mebbe Miss Emily won't considah dat a favor, sah."

Jack laughed heartily.

"That is one point of view," he said. "Ah, well, Pompey, I'll take chances on that. Just give her my compliments and tell her Captain Jack Clark, of the U. S. Army, would like to see her."

"A'right, sah! I do dat, but I don' believe she will see you, sah."

"Very good. Simply ask her. That is all."

All the while Jack had been talking he had seen a flutter of a light dress between the shutters of an upper window.

He shrewdly guessed that the owner might be up there listening. He was not far from right.

It was some while before the colored servant returned. He came out awkwardly and said:

"If yo' please, sah, Miss Blanchard am predisposed an' can't see yo'."

"Oh," said Jack with an affectation of concern. "Kindly convey my utmost solicitude and tell her I will call again in an hour, when I hope to find her feeling better."

"Yo' don' need to come back no mo', sah. She ain gwine to see yo', sah. Not at all."

"Oh, I see," said Jack unconcernedly. "I am sorry. I simply wanted to offer my services in defence of her home here against Forrest's raiders, who I know are near here and are likely to burn these buildings and loot the store-houses. That is all."

Jack turned to walk away. But he heard a slight cough and the shutters of the window upstairs flew open.

He gave a start as he saw the face of one of the most beautiful young women his eyes had ever rested upon.

She was of the Southern type, fair and petite, with lustrous eyes of brown and a manner so winsome and gentle that one could well have fancied her of some other sphere.

For a moment she turned her gaze upon the boy captain and held him enthralled.

In an instant Jack removed his cap and bowed low.

As soon as he could recover himself he said:

"I hope you will pardon this intrusion. No harm is meant you or any of the members of your family."

The expression of her face changed, and she looked at Jack in an eager, wistful way.

"You—are you one of the Yankees?" she asked.

"I am Captain Jack Clark, of the Fairdale Blues, from New York," he replied. "Some of your people are pleased to call us Yankees."

She drew a hand across her eyes as if to clear her vision.

"Why, you look like a gentleman," she said. "Forgive

me, but we of the South have been taught to regard the Northerners as uncouth and rough."

"That is a misapprehension," replied Jack. "This is one grand country under the Stars and Stripes, and our people are as refined and educated as yours."

"I am pleased to know that," she replied, with a winsome smile. "But why do you come here to kill our people and make war upon us?"

"It is the folly of politicians and demagogues," replied Jack. "If the people at large knew the truth there would be no war. All would be peace."

"It ought to be so."

"That is true."

For a moment she looked at him in a retrospective way. Then she asked:

"What do you seek here?"

"My company is quartered a short distance away. We need rations and I thought I might be able to buy food stuff from you to supply their wants."

"To buy?" she asked. "Then you do not intend to take it without leave?"

"Certainly not! I will pay you with good American gold for anything you may choose to sell. If you do not wish to sell I will go away and trouble you no more."

"Have your soldiers no food?"

"None."

"Cato," she said imperatively to the negro, "see Burling, the overseer, and tell him to give this officer by my order several pigs, plenty of corn and whatever else they may need that we can spare."

"Yes, missus," replied the negro and darted away.

"You are very kind," said Jack courteously. "Shall I make an accounting to the overseer or you?"

"To neither."

"What!"

She flashed an imperious gaze at him.

"No," she said. "You and your soldiers have applied in a manly way for food. I would deny our proverbial hospitality if I accepted pay. You are free to take what you need."

With which she vanished. For a moment Jack stood like one stupefied. He felt a warmth of heart toward this fair mistress of the plantation such as he had never felt toward anyone else not of his own kin.

But he turned and walked away. Half way across the yard he met Cato and a slim man dressed in the Southern fashion.

"Are you Captain Clark?" he asked.

"I am," replied Jack. "And are you Mr. Burling, the overseer?"

"Yes, sir, I reckon I am. Miss Blanchard orders me to give you some foodstuff for your soldiers."

"It is exceedingly kind of Miss Blanchard. I will trespass on her hospitality only to a small extent."

Jack selected several pigs and some fowls. Then he bought a quantity of corn meal from Burling, who professed to own it.

He would take no more.

"I have some curiosity," he said. "Is Miss Blanchard the sole proprietor of this plantation?"

"At present—yes, sir," replied the overseer. "It was owned by her father, David Blanchard, but he was killed in battle at Prairie Grove, Missouri. Since then she has directed all affairs here herself. She is a very bright young woman."

"I agree with you, sir," said Jack. "She is all of that. I can assure you that we are very grateful to you both for your kindness."

A small detachment of Blues came down and got the supplies.

Then Jack returned to his camp. The boys were glad indeed to make bivouac, for their past experiences had been trying indeed.

In a short time they had campfires going.

Many of the Blues were so exhausted that they were glad to roll themselves up in their blankets and go to sleep at once.

Jack and Hal Martin, however, had no thought of such a thing.

Jack busied himself studying up a new plan of campaign. He knew that their position was still far from being a safe one.

At any moment some heavy detachment of Confederate troops might descend upon them.

It might be said, as Jack well knew, that their encounter with Forrest had been a decidedly lucky venture.

In face of such overwhelming odds, they could have expected ordinarily nothing less than a defeat. But they had really gained the advantage by capturing the battery.

Jack posted a heavy line of pickets and sent videttes mounted on the battery horses far out into the country.

Thus matters were when suddenly the distant notes of a bugle were heard. In an instant Jack and Hal were upon their feet.

They at first anticipated an attack, but a moment later a picket came in with the report that the colors of a Union cavalry squad were to be seen half a mile to the east.

"Who can that be?" cried Hal. "Can you guess, Jack?"

"No," replied the boy captain. "We must ascertain. It may be a ruse of Forrest to deceive us."

So he at once called out the guard and with them went to the picket line. Then he was given a great surprise.

From the forest some distance away there emerged a trooper dressed in Union blue.

He carried a white flag. At once Jack stepped out to meet him.

"What regiment are you?" asked the truce-bearer, "Union or Confederate?"

"We are the Fairdale Blues," replied Jack.

The truce-bearer gave a cry of delight:

"Good! We have found you at last!" he cried.

"You have been looking for us?" asked Jack in surprise.

"Yes. We are Gordon's troop of Home Guards from Ohio. General Grant sent us down here, to look you up. He much feared that you had been cut off."

Jack felt a thrill.

"That was kind of the general, to take such an interest in us," he said. "We are all right, thanks to Providence, and hope everything is well with the army."

"It is," replied the truce-bearer. "I will go back and report to Colonel Gordon, and he will call on you."

In a few moments, two mounted officers rode out of the woods. When they reached the spot where Jack was they dismounted.

One was a man of prepossessing appearance, having a kindly, open face, and wearing a heavy beard.

He was Colonel Gordon, of the troop of Home Guards. The young man with him was Lieutenant Colby.

They shook hands warmly with Jack.

"General Grant was worried about you," said Colonel Gordon. "He sent us down to look you up."

"We are in fine condition," replied Jack.

"That is good! But how does it happen that, on foot, you dared to venture so far into the enemy's country?"

Jack was surprised.

"Is not the army right behind us?"

"Bless you, no! The Army of the Tennessee is at this moment moving on Fort Donelson. They are far to the north of us. You have gone south of our most extended line."

Jack Clark was amazed. At the same time, he was chagrined and startled. He feared that this might prevent his participation in the attack on Donelson.

But Gordon, who seemed to read his mind, said:

"You must have strayed from the right track, captain?"

"It seems that I must."

"Have no fear, though. You will get back in time. No doubt your presence down here has prevented any attempt to capture the supply train of our right wing. Have you seen anything of the enemy?"

"Do you see those guns?"

Jack pointed to three fine field pieces. The colonel gave a start.

"Did you capture those?"

"We did."

"Who from?"

"General Forrest and his cavalry."

The Union cavalry colonel whistled. He stared at Jack in amazement.

"Aren't you mistaken?" he asked.

"No, sir! I am not!"

"Do you mean to say that you, a company of infantry, captured that battery from Forrest? Why, he is the greatest fighter the Confederates have. Moreover, he is in heavy force hereabout. I should hardly care to attack him myself."

"Nevertheless, it is true," said Jack; "the guns speak for themselves. It is true that Forrest had a superior force and might have beaten us in an open fight, but we got away from him."

With this, Jack detailed the whole story to Colonel Gordon, who listened with the deepest interest.

When he had finished, Gordon said:

"This will win you great credit when General Grant hears of it. It was certainly a smart thing to do. But I think you had better march for Donelson with us."

"I shall be pleased to do so," said Jack. "My men are resting just now. They will be ready in a few hours."

"Very good! My men will need to rest their horses. I will see you later in the day."

Colonel Gordon's coming was a matter of much joy to the Blues. It was a reinforcement at a much-needed time, and they felt a greater degree of safety.

For they knew that at any moment Forrest might swoop down on them again.

CHAPTER IV.

MISS BLANCHARD'S REQUEST.

Gordon's cavalry consisted of a body of six hundred men. They were well armed and mounted.

But Gordon was not the shrewd master hand at fighting and strategy that Forrest was.

So he had no intention of seeking battle with the Confederate officer. He was satisfied to hover around the vicinity of Donelson, to do what damage he could.

Jack Clark allowed his boys to obtain their much-needed rest.

The sun had reached the meridian, and Jack was about to partake of his frugal meal of hoe cake and broiled chicken, when the negro Cato appeared on the scene.

"Massa Captain," he said with a bow and scrape, "I'se done sent heah by Missy Em'ly, to come down to de plantation house. She done wants fo' to see yo'."

"Very good, Cato," replied Jack. "Go back and tell her that I will come down at once."

The negro departed.

Jack wondered somewhat what the fair mistress of the plantation could want. But he was bound to answer her summons.

So he brushed up his uniform, and presently walked into the yard. At the porch, he looked up at the window where he had first seen her.

But she was not there this time.

As he stepped upon the porch, the door opened, and Cato stood there. The negro showed him into a long room, well furnished after the manner of Southern houses.

Jack had barely seated himself, when Emily Blanchard entered the room. He was upon his feet in an instant.

"This is an unexpected honor," he began.

"The honor is mine," she interposed. "Pray be seated, captain. I beg that you will accept the hospitality of our table at dinner to-day."

"I insist that you do me great honor," said Jack, courteously. "The pleasure will be so great that I could not refuse, though I must say that it was unexpected."

"Are all Northern soldiers as polite as you?" laughed the young girl. "I think you outdo our Southern men. But, to be serious, I have another motive than alone the pleasure of your company to dinner to-day."

Jack was curious.

"I shall be pleased to know what that is," he said.

"You shall, presently. But let me break the subject to you while at the dinner table."

She rose, and he offered her his arm. The folding doors were opened by a butler, and they entered the dining-room.

The table was charmingly adorned with costly silver. Flowers filled heavy vases. The viands were now brought by attending negroes.

Jack found that the Southern planter's table lacked no delicacy. He discussed the courses with the greatest of relish, while the occasion was made doubly pleasant by his fair hostess.

Presently, however, she changed the subject adroitly, and said:

"Captain, can you tell me if your general is going to attack Fort Donelson?"

"He is," replied Jack. "We leave here this afternoon on our way thither."

"Ah!" said she, in a low tone. "I fear you will meet with defeat!"

"Defeat?"

"Yes!"

"How can you fancy that? Fort Henry was easily captured."

"But Fort Donelson is more thoroughly built and fortified. It is almost impregnable. To approach it from the land side will necessitate going through a series of outer works, which are impregnable."

"Nothing is impregnable to good artillery and brave infantry."

"No doubt you have both. But you will need them if you capture Fort Donelson."

"Just the same, Miss Blanchard, that fort is sure to fall."

"You have faith in your cause?"

"I have!"

She smiled, and toyed with her knife.

"It is proper that you should," she said; "but I have faith in our people. They are rising in the majesty of their outraged dignity; and they will strike a terrible blow."

Jack saw that she was prejudiced, and he said, to change the subject:

"We were reinforced to-day. A number of our cavalry arrived."

"I saw them!" she said. "Captain Clark,"—she lowered her voice,—"*I am going to tell you a girl's secret. It may not seem maidenly in me, but I have faith that you are a good and true man. And I need a friend—a friend who has honor, and will stand faithfully by me.*"

Jack was astounded. This was to him a most startling declaration.

He looked at her a moment, and said:

"I do not gather your meaning, Miss Blanchard, but I can answer you that I am completely at your service."

"I knew you would say that," she said, with a smile, "and in just that way. I shall trust you, Captain Clark."

She leaned over the table, and her face flushed as she said:

"I must first confess to you that I am in love."

For a moment Jack felt as if a house had fallen upon him. He gasped and stared at this certainly most unusual young woman.

It was some time before he recovered sufficiently to stammer:

"Y-yes, I suppose so! I—I accept your word for it. That is—I—who is he?"

Then he stopped. He could not have spoken another word to save his life. They looked at each other for some moments, and then both laughed.

"I know you think I am queer," she said, "and I guess I am. But I am talking to you just as I would have talked to my father, who died a hero's death at the battle of Prairie Grove."

Jack felt more than ever queer now. He was tempted to remark that he could not undertake to play the part or fill the shoes of the dead father. But he wisely remained silent.

Had Jack been heart and fancy free, he might have been captivated by the beauty of this erratic Southern girl.

But he was quickly to learn that it would have done him but little good had he done so. Her heart was tied, as well as his own, to another.

"I feel that you would treat me with the same kindness and consideration you would treat a sister."

Jack drew a deep breath.

He saw a way out of the woods. He nodded vigorously, and said:

"Yes! Yes! My sister used often to come to me for advice." Then, with an afterthought: "But not in matters of love."

This seemed to amuse the young girl, for she laughed merrily.

"How perfectly ridiculous you must think me," she said. "Really, I am sane, though you may think I am not. But now, that I have made one step, I will go further.

"I am in love, and, as I believe, I am loved. You know what I mean. My heart is pledged to Warren Claverly. He is the son of rich parents in New Orleans. At the present moment he holds the commission of lieutenant in the Alabama Light Infantry. He is in Fort Donelson this moment, ready to give his life for Dixie."

Her voice quavered a little, and her eyelashes grew wet. Jack's heart gave a little bound.

"I am sorry," he said, sincerely. "I fear that harm will come to him."

Her eyes dilated.

"Why do you think so?" she asked.

"Well, there will be desperate fighting. He is doubtless a brave fellow, and will risk his life. He may be killed. If he is not, he will surely be made a prisoner."

"Never!" she cried, with flashing eyes. "The Stars and Stripes will never wave over Fort Donelson!"

Jack was silent. He could not help but admire the heroic spirit of this beautiful maid of the South.

She breathed excitedly and her manner was tense. But presently she subsided, and again the woman's nature asserted itself.

"Oh, if anything should befall him," she whispered, "if any harm should come to Warren Claverly—I would die."

"Well," said Jack, easily, "how could you help it? I know of nothing that can be done for him."

"There is something you can do for me," she said, recovering herself. "Will you do it?"

"I certainly will not refuse."

"I want to tell you that Warren and I parted in anger. We quarreled over a little matter. He went away, vowing he would never come back. But I know he did not mean it." She gave a start, and the light of fear flashed in her eyes.

"Oh, Heavens! What if it should be so, and he never came back—like many another unfortunate soldier. Ah! I will not have it so! But—I'll tell you! When we quar-

reled, he said he would never come back. I told him, in hasty anger, a lie. I said I did not love him. That was false."

"He will come back," said Jack, reassuringly. "Be sure of that. What is more, he will not believe you serious in your declaration. Lovers' quarrels are never serious."

Hope flashed in her beautiful eyes, and she shot the boy captain a grateful glance.

"This is what I want you to do for me," she said. "If by any chance your men should capture Donelson, and you can find Warren among the prisoners, or you come upon him, give him this from me."

She held out a fine band of gold. Set in it was a glorious sapphire.

"He will know what it means," she said. "Tell him that I love him as man was never loved by woman. Tell him to come back to me."

Jack took the ring. He was stirred to the depths of his soul. It seemed to him a sacred trust.

"Miss Blanchard," he said, "I understand you well, and I have absolute sympathy for you. You could not have entrusted your message to one who will more faithfully endeavor to execute it. There is my word!"

She looked at him in a way he never forgot.

"I thank you," she said.

CHAPTER V.

CAPTURED.

A few moments later, with strange emotions, Jack Clark was striding away from the plantation house.

The little romantic episode had stirred him greatly. He felt that he had a sacred task to perform.

He knew that Donelson must fall. If Warren Claverly was the sort of a young man he took him to be, he would give his life in its defense.

His heart bled for the lovers. That they should be separated forever seemed unbearable. He was determined to do his best to find Claverly.

When Jack got back to the camp, he found Gordon awaiting him.

"How is it, Clark?" asked the cavalry colonel. "Are we not ready to start?"

"At once!" replied Jack. "I will order the long roll beaten. My men shall be in line at once."

"I think we can almost make our lines by nightfall."

"I hope so."

"Certainly we must be on hand to take part in the fight."

"At any cost."

Jack at once ordered the roll beaten. The Blues sprang up and rushed into line as quickly as possible.

They were in marching order in an incredibly short space of time. Colonel Gordon's men were already mounted.

They could easily ride on and reach the scene of battle, but they had been commissioned to find the Blues, and Gordon was determined to remain with them.

So the Blues formed behind the cavalry. The battery brought up the rear.

In this way they set out. In a short time they were traversing the forest roads.

These were not of the best.

The horses had hard work hauling the heavy gun carriages over the rough surface of the roads. They floundered in mire and stumbled over corduroy construction.

But all the while they were nearing Grant's lines, and this was the main thing, after all.

But they did not reach the line of the army that day. Before darkness had well set in, they were bivouacked in a little glade in the woods.

Beyond them was a height of land. Jack climbed this and studied the country beyond.

Far in the distance to his trained hearing came the occasional boom of a cannon.

He knew this was from Fort Donelson. Perhaps Foote's gunboats were moving up to attack.

In any event, he felt that the morrow would hold exciting events.

He went back to the bivouac.

The boys were so tired that many of them had not sought to make camp, but had sunk right down where they were and fallen asleep on the ground.

Jack himself felt quite exhausted, for it was long since he had slept.

As a double line of pickets had been established, he felt safe to seek slumber.

So he rolled himself up in his blanket and lay down with the rest of his company.

In a few moments he was asleep. For a time he slept soundly, but at length he awoke.

It was not yet day. Jack felt chilly and stiff. A cold wind had set in that day from the north, and a spell of winter weather was on.

The young captain sat up and rubbed his joints. Then he got upon his feet.

All about him were the sleeping figures of the company, but Jack had no desire to sleep more.

He made his way among the sleepers, and walked on until he had reached the line of Gordon's camp.

The sentinels paced up and down, and even as Jack stood there the hail went along:

"Two of the clock and all's well!"

The call went down the line, and finally died out. Jack listened, in an abstract way.

Far off in the distance a big gun boomed. The sound brought him back to himself.

He knew that the gun was fired at Fort Donelson.

What did it mean? Was it merely a random shot at the fleet in the river, or had the land forces attacked by night?

He could not believe the latter was the case. However, Jack undertook to gratify his curiosity.

He climbed to the summit of the eminence near by and listened again. But the heavy firing was not resumed.

Below him, at the foot of the hill, was one of Gordon's pickets.

He could hear his tramp as he passed, and at the end of his beat changed his gun to the other shoulder and walked back.

But suddenly a curious sound came from below.

There was a hoarse gurgle and a rustling noise. Then all was still. Jack listened for the tramp of the sentry's feet.

He heard them no more.

They had ceased. He felt a peculiar sensation. What did it mean?

He was determined to investigate.

Jack did not stop to call the guard. He plunged down the descent himself. He reached the sentry's beat and listened.

No sound broke the stillness. The sentinel was no longer on his beat.

Jack walked on for a way and gave a sudden start. At his feet lay a shapeless mass.

It was a human figure.

He bent down over it. With great care, he turned the body over. There was enough light from the sky for him to see that the man's tongue protruded, swollen and hideous.

He had been strangled.

Jack felt a chill. He arose, and for a moment an impending sense of danger was upon him. He knew that he ought to call the guard.

But some strange power held him helpless.

Not until a dark figure stepped out of the gloom before him did he recover himself. A pistol was thrust in his face.

"Surrender, you dog, or we'll kill you where you stand!"

There was no alternative. Jack held up his hands.

A moment before he could have made a break for liberty, but now it was too late.

He knew that if he offered resistance or made an outcry, his life would pay the forfeit even as had that of the poor picket.

Jack was not foolish. He had a horror of being captured, but he knew that a live man is better than a dead hero, so he surrendered.

He saw figures of armed men in the gloom beyond. The man who had gotten the drop on him was a Confederate officer.

He flashed a light in Jack's face.

"Hello!" he exclaimed, hoarsely. "Here's a haul for you, gentlemen: This is Jack Clark, captain of the Fairdale Blues!"

Instantly the others were interested. They pressed forward.

"Hold him, Jerry!" they cried. "Don't let him get away!"

But Jack's captor only laughed.

"Don't fear! He'll not run the risk of a bullet in his hide!"

In an instant Jack was surrounded by the party. He found that they were cavalymen, and that they were part of a large force beyond.

Also he discovered that they were Forrest's men.

The great cavalry leader had tracked the Blues, and had at last come up with them. It was plain that he intended to surprise the camp, else the picket would not have been removed.

This gave the boy captain a chill. He regretted his carelessness in not having called out the guard.

An investigation then would have given the alarm, and he would not have been captured.

As it was, he was unable to act, and for aught he knew, might be hanged by these lawless raiders. A consultation between them was quickly held.

"There's nothing in the way now of rushing their camp," said one of the Confederate officers. "They can be overcome at the first rush."

"Don't you believe it," demurred a more cautious one. "I think we ought to hit from the other side at the same time. I know these Yanks. They fight like fiends."

"What about this prisoner?"

"Send him up to Forrest with a guard. He can do what he pleases with him."

"All right!"

Jack was placed in the hands of a guard, which at once marched away into the woods with him. The boy captain passed lines of armed men.

It was not long before they descended into a ravine.

Here was a camp fire. Before it strode a full-bearded man, with rather long features, and wearing the cavalry uniform of the Confederacy, with a general's straps upon his shoulders.

"General Forrest," said the officer of the guard, "we have brought you a prisoner."

Forrest turned and fixed his keen gaze upon Jack. In the firelight the faces of both were plain.

"What's this!" he cried. "Why, he is only a boy! And with the rank of captain, eh? Where did you get him, Strong?"

"On the enemy's picket line, sir. He is captain of that company of Fairdale Blues, which captured our battery."

Forrest gave a great start.

Interest shone in his face instantly, and he took a step nearer, looking at Jack critically.

"Are you the chap who gave us such a clever beating last night?" he demanded. "I can't believe my eyes. You look too young, too harmless. So you are Captain Jack Clark, eh?"

"That is my name," replied Jack. "Do I address General Forrest?"

"You do, sir!"

"I hope, sir, that you will accord me the courtesy of a prisoner of war!"

"Most certainly, Captain Clark," replied General Forrest courteously. "A man so brave and skillful as you deserves special consideration."

"Thank you. I understand that you are about to attack my camp?"

"We are."

"I warn you that you will meet with defeat, for we have been strongly reinforced."

Forrest snapped his finger.

"Gordon's cavalry!" he said, with a sneer. "We will snuff them out like a candle. I am sorry for you, captain, but I shall soon have your command in my power."

Jack felt the force of this declaration himself.

CHAPTER VI.

A DARING ESCAPE.

But Jack did not show his fears to the Confederate general. On the contrary, he was cool and apparently confident.

"I advise you to proceed with care, General Forrest," he

said. "It is not Colonel Gordon alone whom you will meet."

"I realize that," replied Forrest, "but though your boys can fight like demons, we greatly outnumber them. Well, captain, I am sorry that I am unable to entertain you further at present. I must give my attention to the attack. I will meet you later."

With this, Forrest turned and gave orders to guard the prisoner. Then he strode away.

Jack sat on a log before the camp fire. The guard of three paced up and down before him.

He looked into the blackness of the woods and counted his chances for escape if he should make a dash for it.

But he quickly decided that it would mean death.

He listened for the first sounds of the attack, with something like a chill.

He could picture it all out in his mind. He saw the lines of gray creeping up in the darkness.

He could see his boys sleeping about their fires. He could hear the sharp command and see the bayonet rush.

Then would follow the alarm, the panic, the slaughter. The picture was horribly vivid.

It got upon his nerves.

"No! No!" he cried, springing up. "Don't let them do it! Up, Blues! Up!"

The guards stared at him as they would a maniac. Jack sat down again upon the log and listened.

Then he heard a distant musket shot.

It was followed by others, more and more distant. It sounded like a picket line firing.

A wild thrill of hope seized him.

"Perhaps they have got the alarm in time," he mused. "Pray Heaven they have. There may be a chance."

Then upon the distant night air rose the sounds of conflict, volleys of musketry, blended with shouts and yells of contending men.

Jack felt like one held in a vise. It seemed as if he would go mad, to sit there inactive and know what was going on.

He gasped, and looked again furtively into the depths of the woods. Again he counted his chances.

But he gave a sudden start.

What was that?

What did he see in the shadows? Was he dreaming? He rubbed his eyes.

A long, bony hand, upheld in the edge of the firelight. It made a gesture to him. Then gradually out of the gloom there emerged a face.

One moment it was plainly visible and recognizable to him. He gave a little start and muttered:

"It is Sanders, the scout!"

It was certainly the face of the famous Union scout which he saw. Jack felt a wild thrill of hope.

The scout knew his position. He knew the necessity of effecting his release, and he was in just the position to do so.

He would rescue him.

The young captain felt sure of this, and it was a realization of much joy. But he began to wonder how Sanders would gain his end, and whether he could help him.

The scout's face was visible only a few moments, and Jack knew that it was only to reassure him.

He sat there, however, and waited, it seemed, an age.

The distant sounds of the fight were growing fainter. He knew that it could have but one meaning.

The Union forces were retreating. He knew that Gordon was no match whatever for a consummate master of strategy like Forrest.

Soon the sounds of conflict grew more and more distant.

Finally only an occasional gun in the remote distance could be heard.

Then into the circle of firelight there sprang the figure of a young officer. It was one of Forrest's men.

"Come!" he cried to the guard. "You are to take the prisoner and march to Gray's Ford. We have driven the Yanks, and General Forrest will rendezvous at Gray's."

"All right!" cried the guard. And one of them sprang to get the horses. The orderly, after delivering his message, turned and mounted, and dashed away.

The horses were quickly brought.

As there were but three of them, Jack was made to mount one, and one of the guards mounted behind him.

Then they rode away slowly into the forest. Jack wondered what had become of Sanders, the scout.

For some ways, the guard and their prisoner rode on through the woods road. Suddenly they came to a creek, which had been spanned by a bridge.

But the bridge had been burned. Only the abutments remained. The current was deep and strong.

This obstacle in the path for a time bothered the three guards. One of them, who bore the rank of corporal, forced his horse out into the current a ways, to test the depth.

The horse was carried off his feet, but continued to swim despite this, and reached the other shore.

"Come on, boys!" shouted the corporal. "I've shown you the way! Now, swim over!"

This seemed easy enough for guard No. 2. But guard No. 3 had Jack with him, and it was hardly likely that his horse could carry their combined weight.

"Hold on, Barton!" cried guard No. 2. "What will we do with the prisoner? How will we get him over?"

This was a question.

For a time they pondered the subject. All the while Jack kept his wits at work.

"Let me take the horse and swim over," he said. "Once I'm over, you can return with the other horse and get your friend."

This seemed logical enough.

"All right," agreed guard No. 3, as he slipped down and left Jack on the horse. "Now, Yank, we'll cover you with our muskets, and any trick will put you out of business. See?"

"All right!" agreed Jack. "It shall be so!"

He urged the horse into the stream and soon was on his way across. He was met on the other side by guard No. 1, who had crossed the stream first.

He had covered Jack with his musket, so there was no chance for the boy captain as yet.

Now, however, it was necessary for the other two guards to cross, and they had but one horse between them.

The only way this could be accomplished was for one of these soldiers to swim across and return with the horse used by Jack.

So Jack dismounted and stood under cover of the first guard's musket, while the second guard swam over with his horse, and, taking Jack's horse, went back with both animals.

The problem now seemed solved, and in a few minutes more all would have crossed the stream with success.

But all the while Jack had kept his eyes open, and had been looking for a chance to escape.

It seemed to him as if this chance would not offer itself, when suddenly he beheld a startling sight.

The first guard had dismounted and stood by his horse. Suddenly from the bushes behind him stepped a lithe figure.

Jack gave a gasp.

It was Sanders, the scout.

Sanders walked noiselessly up behind the guard. A warning cry came from the guards on the other side of the stream.

But it was too late.

Sanders had sprung forward like a panther. One arm encircled the soldier's neck. The other was around his body.

"Take his weapons away, boy!" he called out to Jack.

In an instant Jack obeyed. He easily took the fellow's musket away. A bullet whistled past him.

The guard on the other shore had fired, but he fired wide.

"Keep the gun, boy!" cried Sanders. "Strap this fellow with his belt. We don't want to murder him."

In a moment Jack had unbuckled the belt, and had bound the guard securely. His ankles were secured with his canteen strap.

In the meantime, the two guards on the other shore had started to cross. Sanders caught the musket from Jack's hand.

"Too bad to kill a good horse," he said, "but they must be stopped."

Quick as a flash, he aimed and fired. The horse neighed once and went down into the current. The rider struck out for the other shore.

The other guard did not venture an attempt to cross.

"I think we have settled them," said Sanders. "Now, boy, get on to that horse, and let's be off."

Jack sprang into the saddle, and Sanders up behind him. They galloped away at random.

In the starlight it was not difficult to see the path. Not until they had covered some miles did they pull rein.

Then Sanders exclaimed:

"Pull up the horse, boy! Let's get down here!"

"Where are we?" asked Jack.

"Two miles from the military road to Donelson," replied Sanders. "We are within hailing distance of our lines."

"The deuce!" exclaimed Jack. "That is the best of news! We shall be in at the fight, anyway!"

"If we are here to-morrow, we will see the first attack, but I fear we may not be here."

"Why?" asked Jack, in surprise.

"Well, for one, I must go away on a new service. For you, it will be necessary for you to hunt up your company."

"You are right!" cried Jack. "I had not thought of that! I wonder where the boys are at this moment?"

"They were driven by Forrest's men, and I fear they were scattered, and many captured."

This was discouraging news to Jack, but he was not the one to repine.

"Very well," he said, quietly. "I will take part in the assault alone, as a member of some other company."

"Well said!" exclaimed Sanders. "But now I must take my leave."

"One word."

"Well?"

"Where did you come from?"

"I am from General Grant. I made report to him since I saw you last. Then I carried a dispatch to General McClelland. I was on my way back when I came upon For-

rest's camp and saw you a prisoner. I could not go by without giving you aid."

"You have saved my life," said Jack, warmly. "I shall not forget it, Sanders."

"It's all right, my boy. Now be wise, and do not take too many risks. I advise you to first push on and gain the lines. Perhaps you may find news of your comrades at headquarters."

"I will do so."

"If not, General Grant will give you a squad of men with which to pursue the quest."

"I don't know," said Jack, "but I have a vague hope that the Blues have squirmed out of their scrape and are at this moment within the lines."

"Perhaps they are. I hope so, at least," said the scout.

Jack gripped hands warmly with Sanders.

"I shall not forget you," he said. "You have saved my life."

"Good-by, my boy!"

"Good-by!"

Sanders was gone. He had left the horse with Jack, and plunged into the gloom of the woods.

CHAPTER VII.

REPORTING TO GENERAL GRANT.

For some time, Jack Clark remained where he was after the departure of Sanders.

He was plunged into the deepest of thought. He did not know just what method to adopt.

Morning was near at hand.

In an hour, the guns of Donelson would be booming. Masses of blue infantry would be charging the breastworks and trying to capture them.

Jack's veins tingled.

He was anxious to be in that melee with his own brave Boys in Blue, but he knew not at that moment where they might be.

For aught he could say, they were prisoners in the hands of the notorious Forrest.

In that case, he could hardly hope to lead them to the attack on Fort Donelson.

But Jack was an optimist. He always looked on the bright side of a picture.

He would not believe but that his beloved comrades-in-arms were somewhere not far distant, and on their way to join in the morrow's assault.

The horse which had been taken from the Confederate

trooper was a genuine thoroughbred and an intelligent animal.

Jack patted his velvety muzzle and then sprang upon his back.

"I will find the Blues!" he cried. "I know that Lieutenant Martin would hold them together!"

First, however, he knew that it was his best plan to visit the Union line, and ascertain if possible if news had been obtained from the Blues.

It was not at all improbable that they had reported there, in which case Jack would be very glad.

So he set his course according to the directions given him by Sanders. He rode on at a gallop, until suddenly the woods road made a bend, and he saw the open country before him.

The low-lying tract of land here extended to the banks of the Cumberland. That river was not two miles distant.

Far out on the river course rocked at anchor the gunboats of Foote, ready for the morrow's bombardment.

In the foreground were gleaming stars of light, thickly sprinkling the pall of the night. These were the myriad camp fires of the Union army.

Jack paused to gaze spellbound upon the scene.

Down there in that flat expanse were thousands of brave hearts, far from their homes, and waiting for the morrow, not knowing but that it might be their last on earth.

Jack shivered a little. The night air was chill.

Just then a sharp, stern voice rang out upon the air:

"Halt! Who goes there?"

"A friend!"

"Advance, friend, and give the countersign!"

Jack reined his horse nearer.

"Sentry," he said, "I wish you would call the guard. I must see General Grant at once."

"Who are you?"

"I am Captain Jack Clark, of the Fairdale Blues!"

"If you will wait, the guard will be on hand in half an hour."

"But I cannot wait that long. My time is valuable. I must ask you to call up the guard now."

"That is unusual at this hour of the morning. Is your business important? Are you a scout?"

"My business is extremely important. I positively must see General Grant."

The sentry hesitated a moment. Then he raised his gun and fired into the air.

In a few moments the tramp of feet and the rattle of arms were heard, and a number of soldiers came rushing down in the darkness.

The corporal of the guard hailed the picket:

"What is wanted? What is wrong?"

"A message for General Grant," said the picket. "This man wants to pass the lines."

The corporal stepped forward.

"Dismount and advance, sir," he said: "Who are you?"

"I am Captain Jack Clark, of the Fairdale Blues."

"You wish to pass the lines?"

"I do."

"You have not the countersign?"

"No."

"Have you your commission with you?"

"Yes."

"Advance and show it."

Jack drew his captain's commission from his pocket and drew nearer to the corporal. One of the guards had a lantern.

This was flashed in Jack's face and his uniform was noted. Then the commission was examined.

"All right, Captain Clark," said the corporal. "Fall in, and I will take you to headquarters. We are especially particular for the reason that the hour is late and I cannot disturb the general without good cause."

"In that case," said Jack, "you need not disturb him. If I may see his clerk or some subordinate officer that will be all that is necessary."

"I will ascertain," said the corporal.

Through the company streets they passed, until at last they reached the tent of the great Union general.

The orderly at the door said:

"General Grant is astir, and is at present writing dispatches. I have no doubt he will see you."

"Kindly give my name," said Jack: "Captain Jack Clark."

The orderly bowed and departed. In a few moments he returned.

"General Grant will see you," he said.

Jack bowed, and followed the orderly into the tent. The next moment he stood in the presence of the famous general, who was destined to write his name higher on the pages of American history than any other.

"Ah, Captain Clark," said General Grant, curtly, "at last I hear from you."

Jack started as if stung. The manner of his general gave him a shock.

"Did you expect to hear from me sooner?" he asked.

"I certainly did," replied General Grant. "Will you explain?"

"I am much pained," said Jack. "I thought we had accomplished the object of our expedition successfully."

"Well, let me know in what manner."

"We preceded your column, as you ordered," said Jack.

"The course we pursued was identical with the one given me by you."

"But the army changed its course."

"Of that we were not cognizant until we had gone almost into the jaws of death," replied Jack. "It is owing to that fact that I am separated from my company at this moment."

General Grant gave a violent start.

"Separated from your company?"

"Yes."

"Where are they?"

"I do not know."

"Why—this is astonishing. What has brought you here then?"

"To report to you and ask for a detachment, to enable me to go in quest of my comrades."

"Well, well! We will see about that! Didn't Sanders, the scout, tell you that we had changed our line of march?"

"He did."

"Why did you not fall back then?"

"It was too late," replied Jack. "We were cut off by Forrest and his cavalry. We have but one hundred men in our company, but we gave battle to his detachment of two thousand, and defeated them."

"Defeated them? Will you tell how? This seems preposterous!"

"It is, nevertheless, the truth. We captured their battery of three guns and then gave them the slip and went on to Blanchard's plantation. After leaving there, we joined forces with Gordon's cavalry. I was on the picket line, when, by a stratagem, a party of Forrest's men killed the picket and captured me.

"Forrest, with whom I had a personal interview, then attacked and drove my company and Gordon's men——"

"Gordon!" exclaimed Grant, contemptuously. "He never yet held his ground!"

"Very well, sir. I was left in charge of a guard of three. By a ruse, and with the assistance of Sanders, the scout, I escaped. I then made my way here to report to you."

General Grant knit his brows.

"On my word, Clark, it looks as if you were not to blame at all. I think you and your boys have done brave work. I must congratulate you."

"Thank you, General Grant. None of my boys will shirk their duty."

"I believe you. Now, my boy, I will give you such a detachment as you may need, although every man will be needed in the assault to-morrow——"

"I will have them back in time, sir, for I intend to take part in the fight myself."

"Good for you! Spoken like a man! If you do not find your company, I will attach you for the time to my staff."

Just then an orderly stepped into the tent.

General Grant looked up, and asked:

"Well?"

"If you please, general, two detachments have just arrived from the South, and report an engagement with General Forrest. They are Gordon's cavalry and the Fairdale Blues."

A sharp cry escaped Jack. Joy unspeakable was in his face.

"The Blues!" he gasped. "They have come!"

"That seems like good news to you," said General Grant, with a smile. "Well, orderly, what is it?"

"The officers of these detachments are waiting to report to you."

"Show them in," said the general.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FIRST DAY AT DONELSON.

The next moment into the tent walked the much be-whiskered and gold-laced Colonel Gordon, and behind him Hal Martin, lieutenant of the Blues.

With a simultaneous cry, Jack and Hal rushed together.

"Hooray!" cried the young lieutenant. "Won't this be joyful news to the boys? They had given you up for dead!"

"And the Blues—were they cut to pieces, as I feared—"

"Not a bit of it! Gordon made several counter charges, and we were able to retreat in good order. We had a running fight with Forrest for four miles. Then he gave it up. We lost only six men."

To say that Jack Clark was overjoyed would be a mild statement.

General Grant seemed equally as well pleased.

"Well, Clark," he said, "everything has worked for the best. Rest your men now. I shall not order any general assault until noon. Then you shall have a chance."

"Thank you, General Grant."

"That is all right. Now, Gordon, I will talk with you."

Jack and Hal left the tent. They went at once to the camp of the Blues.

What a happy meeting that was between the Blues and their young captain, whom they had deemed lost. They cheered themselves hoarse.

But the boys now threw themselves down to rest.

The past few days had been indeed strenuous for them. They were upon the point of exhaustion.

Jack and Hal, however, after an hour's sleep, were astir with the break of day, to examine the situation of the forces and the enemy's lines.

In the distance, with their glasses, they could see the redoubts and the earthworks of the fort.

Heavy guns were mounted thereon. A large force of Confederates were behind them, ready to sweep down the charging lines of infantry.

All was eager excitement and bustle in the Union lines.

The officers were hurrying hither and thither, in their haste to get their positions in the line of assault.

The fort was completely invested. A semicircle of Union troops from river to river held the land side, and Foote's gunboats were on the water.

But the attack by the gunboats had not been the success expected.

The Confederate batteries were powerful, and, opening a plunging fire, soon had disabled a number of the craft. It became necessary for Admiral Foote, who had fought with such success at Fort Henry, to withdraw.

This he did, and for a time the assault was suspended from the water side of the fort.

But now came the order for which the impatient troops had been so long waiting.

"Ready, arms! Forward!"

The division of McClernand moved forward and attacked a battery on a ridge of the road leading to the fort.

The brave Boys in Blue, with a cheer, rushed forward and opened fire. For a time the battle was desperate. It was hard to say which way it would turn.

Jack Clark and his Blues had been held back. The order had not yet come for them to advance.

Jack, who, with Colonel Gordon, was watching the first advance upon the battery, noted its futility, and said:

"That will be a repulse. I am sorry to say that, but I am sure of it."

"How do you make that claim?" asked the puffy colonel.

"Easy enough. The battery has heavy guns. The attacking force has no support of adequate sort."

"I suppose General McClernand knows what he is doing."

"I dare say. But that does not alter the case. You will see that he will be repulsed."

The scene was grand beyond description.

The thunder of the heavy guns shook the earth. The sky was overhung with heavy palls of battle smoke.

The glitter of the bayonets, the long, on-moving line of blue uniforms was inspiring in the extreme.

Jack felt a thrill, and felt as if he would care to be nothing else but a soldier.

On up the ridge went the long, blue line. Once they were at the summit.

Then it seemed as if the hill vomited smoke and flame. It was not possible for human power to stem that awful torrent of death.

The blue line melted.

Heaps of slain lay on the ground. The stragglers came back, mere remnants of the grand regiments which a few minutes before had filed out into the line of battle.

Many a brave man who had left his home and loved ones to fight for the Union had taken his leave of them forever on that fatal hillside.

Many a gray-haired mother, many a weeping wife would mourn in far-away Northern homes and listen in vain for the footstep that would never return.

Such is war. On one side power and pride and pomp and glory. On the other misery and suffering, wretched and hideous, frightful and wicked. Yet war marks the path of civilization.

McClelland's first assault had been a failure.

The Confederates cheered at their guns. To them it seemed as if victory was assured.

The fleet had been defeated and the first attack of the land forces repelled.

It was only necessary to follow up this sort of thing to make Donelson forever impregnable to Northern arms.

Colonel Gordon was astonished.

"They were repulsed," he said. "Some of our best regiments. It does not seem possible."

"Well, it is possible," said Jack, quietly. "I felt sure it would be so."

"You must be a wizard, Clark."

"No. I only based my judgment upon the condition of affairs and the futility of a single line of assault."

"Ah! You think that was an error?"

"Assuredly! General Grant himself is not here, or I feel sure he would have ordered a different sort of attack. There should have been several lines behind this one."

"Why, may I ask?"

"To support it. In the first place, to give it confidence. In the second place, to fill the gap, if the first line is cut down, as this was."

Gordon pulled at his beard.

"You may be right, Clark," he said, "but I can't see it. Of course, the first line of men may feel some little confidence, knowing there is another line behind them, but if the first line is driven back, it falls back on the second line,

and throws it into confusion. I have seen a complete rout ensue from those sort of tactics."

The colonel spoke with conviction, as if he could not be questioned.

Jack, however, only smiled.

"The day of close formations is past, I will admit," he said, "but you will not deny that a single, thin line, once broken, is wiped out. It cannot reform or renew the attack."

"A second line of the same sort will also be hurled back."

"Thus an army would be beaten in detail. No, sir. Any charge or quick assault must have concentration and power behind it or it will surely fail."

"Every man has his own ideas of generalship," said Gordon.

"That is true," agreed Jack. "There would be no defeats, hence no victories, otherwise."

Gordon grunted, and dropped the subject. But now an apt illustration of Jack's claim was seen.

The remnants of the repulsed regiments were rallied and hurried forward again. They were reinforced by others, and now the second attempt was made to carry the battery.

Up, up the hillside went the brave column in blue. Up, and it seemed as if they would swarm over the summit.

But they did not.

Fire and death leaped from the breastworks, and they were hurled back as if with giant hands.

Down the slope they came in a disorganized mass. The loss of life was frightful.

McClelland's attempt was a failure. Hundreds of dead soldiers lay upon the hillside. All the rest of that day the desultory conflict was kept up.

Jack Clark and his Blues were on the firing line for a time, but when darkness came they were recalled.

And now began the real suffering of that awful day.

The night settled down dark and cold. The temperature went down to an unheard of point for that part of the country.

The suffering of the troops became intense. A bitter storm of hail and sleet set in, and covered the ground with snow and ice.

The cries of the wounded were piteous to hear. Little could be done for them, for the strong had all they could do to hold their own.

That first night at Donelson was never forgotten by those who participated in that fateful assault.

The Confederates had thus far been victorious, but even in their hour of victory, the faint-heartedness of one of their generals turned the scale.

At midnight a number of Union gunboats arrived, bring-

ing General Lew Wallace's division of heavy reinforcements for Grant.

The Confederate General Floyd had seen this, and took alarm.

He believed that with such a heavy force, Grant might cut him off completely from all lines of communication, and thus besiege him in his stronghold.

This was something which Floyd could not consider.

He decided to abandon the fort.

That night a council of war was held. Generals Pillow and Buckner conferred with Floyd, and the conference was a warm one, if history is truthful.

General Floyd's plan was to cut his way out of the fort by forcing a way down the Wynn's Ferry road past Grant's right.

"Our position in this fort is untenable," he declared. "The guns of the enemy from the water and the land can reach the very citadel itself. They can, in time, shell us out.

"Now, I propose to get out while there is a chance, and retreat to Nashville. It is our only hope."

General Pillow sided with his confrere-at-arms.

But General Buckner, staid old soldier, shook his head, and said:

"It is unwise and it is dishonorable to abandon the fort. I propose to stay in its walls to the last."

Had Floyd been of Buckner's quality, had all from the first made an aggressive stand, it is possible that the story of Fort Donelson might have been different. But he did not, and a Union victory was the result.

CHAPTER IX.

THE BLUES' GREAT CHARGE.

The gunboats carried on the attack of Friday. They sailed bravely up to within easy firing distance and hurled shot and shell into the fort.

But Donelson had good gunners, and they answered with a fire which drove the boats back.

Admiral Foote was wounded, and the attack, like the land assault, was a prompt failure.

This should have encouraged the defenders of the fort to hold their ground, but now ensued the mistake which changed the tide of battle.

So insanely anxious was Floyd to save his neck by getting out of Donelson while there was yet time, that he ordered a new disposition of his forces.

His plan was to throw out the forces of General Pillow

in a sally against McClelland's right flank, and with Buckner's division to attack the Federal centre.

If Pillow could force back the right upon the centre, Buckner might take them in the flank and completely rout them. The Wynn's Ferry road would thus be opened and an escape assured.

The plan was a bold and clever one. The Confederates went at its execution in a brave manner.

At first, fortune favored them.

The Confederate left, on emerging from the fort, at first forced back the two brigades of the Union right.

Buckner assaulted the third Union brigade successfully. By nine-o'clock General Grant's whole right wing had been pressed back, and the Wynn's Ferry road was opened.

The defenders of the fort might now have escaped.

All this time General Grant had been absent from the field.

He had been aboard one of the gunboats, conferring with Admiral Foote. He reached the field at nine o'clock.

As he rode down the line and saw the disorganized masses of his defeated right wing, his face never changed its expression.

Sphinx-like, he sat there, and gave his orders rapidly.

To the amazement of all his generals, the order was:

"Advance all along the line!"

That a defeated army should again risk an advance seemed foolhardy, but Grant was general enough to recognize one fact.

This was that, now that the battle had lulled, the first one to make the attack would have the advantage. His judgment proved correct.

The Fairdale Blues rested on their arms but a few yards away.

General Grant, turning, saw Jack Clark, and beckoned to him. His face showed a genial smile.

"My boy," he said, "you haven't had much chance yet, but we are going to storm the rear of that tier of batteries by the river. Once they are carried, we have the key to Donelson, for we can enfilade and drive them from their works."

"I am ready to go in when the order comes," said Jack.

"Have patience! It shall come! I am saving you, with others, for that supreme effort! That one charge that will win us the day if it succeeds!"

Jack, thrilled with excitement, went back to his boys and told them what the general had said.

"I am waiting!" cried Hal Martin. "I wish they'd hurry up!"

It was not long now, however, before the order came.

General Smith's division headed the advance. The Blues were in the second line of assault.

"Forward, boys! Double quick, march! Charge bayonets!"

The officers' orders went rapidly along the line of blue. On rushed the mass of eager soldiers.

The weather was cold and chill. They had suffered all sorts of privations, had slept on the ground without shelter, and were in that savage frame of mind which a man acquires from privation.

That is to say, they were in a real fighting mood, and ready for any risk, no matter how great.

Up went the charging line. Three times they were beaten back. It looked as if another repulse was to be the order of the day.

The gunboats were thundering and the artillery was booming. Buckner's division, which had been withdrawn from this part of the enemy's defenses, was coming back.

There was no time to lose if the height was to be carried.

General Grant ordered fresh brigades forward. Another line went up the hill. Up, up they went and staggered. Back they were being driven.

But just at that critical moment, when the fortunes of the day hung in the balance, a startling scene was witnessed.

General Grant and his staff, from their post of observation, saw a single company emerge from the staggering lines of blue.

It rushed on over the heaps of slain, the Stars and Stripes showed in the van, and was now almost at the summit.

"What company is that?" cried General Grant to one of his staff. "Make a note of them!"

The officer whom he had addressed had been studying the scene through his glass. He made reply:

"It is the Fairdale Blues."

The great commander gave a start, and, raising his own glass, focused it upon the daring little force. He saw that he had been told the truth.

Up the steep ascent went the Fairdale Blues, with Jack Clark at their head.

That brilliant charge, in the face of the deadly guns of the fort, was never forgotten by those who saw it.

It was enacted at the most critical moment. It turned the tide of battle.

The Blues might have been swept out of existence by a single discharge of those mighty guns, but fortune was with them.

It happened at a moment when the guns were being recharged. Before the gunners could get to their lanyards, the daring boy company was over the parapet.

Men in the shattered ranks stopped in sheer wonderment to see the work of this company of boys.

It had a tremendous moral effect upon them. With one mad cheer of approval, they turned in their tracks and came back.

The Blues were fighting hand to hand with the gunners, when over the breastworks surged a thousand excited and exultant Union soldiers.

"Hurrah! Hurrah!"

Their mad cheers made the air ring. Out of the redoubt the Confederates were driven, with fearful loss. The great point of vantage had been captured.

Again and again the Confederates charged, to retake the breastworks, but it was in vain.

They were held by the Union soldiers. They could not be driven out.

Darkness fell upon the fearful day at Donelson. Dead and dying men lay upon the frozen ground. Blood was everywhere, all the evidences of brutal war.

The position was now vastly in favor of the Union forces.

They had captured a position from which to enfilade the works. Donelson was at their mercy.

Only one thing could be done by the Confederates the next morning.

That was to retake the redoubt or surrender. That night a second council of war was held by the Confederate generals.

All honor is due to the brave Buckner, who remained in the fort. Nothing but shame could follow the action of those who took themselves away at that time, when their support was needed.

Morning dawned upon Donelson. It was chill and bleak, but the Boys in Blue turned out of their blankets and answered the long roll which called them to arms.

General Grant was now all ready for the assault, but just as he was about to open fire a white flag issued from the portals of the fort.

Quoting from history, the following communication reached General Grant:

"General U. S. Grant:

"I ask of you that a truce of twelve hours be allowed, with a view to considering the best terms of capitulation of this fort and the appointing of a commission therefor. Please reply.

"S. B. BUCKNER, Commanding General."

To this, General Grant made the historic reply, which has ever since been coupled with his name:

"Sir: Yours of this date, proposing an armistice and

appointment of commission to settle terms of capitulation is just received. No terms other than an unconditional and immediate surrender can be accepted. I propose to move immediately on your works.

"(Signed) U. S. GRANT."

The effect of the blunt and peremptory answer upon the courteous and chivalrous Buckner can be imagined. However, his reply was at once forwarded:

"Sir: The distribution of forces under my command, incident to an unexpected change of commanders, and the overwhelming force under your command, compel me, notwithstanding the brilliant success of the Confederate arms yesterday, to accept the ungenerous and unchivalrous terms which you propose.

"(Signed) S. B. BUCKNER."

But General Grant proved that he could be generous, as well as his opponent, and allowed the officers their side arms and baggage, and assured them the most courteous of treatment.

So fell Fort Donelson.

For its far-reaching effects upon the people of the South and the cause of the Confederacy in general, it was exceeded by no other Union victory of the whole war.

CHAPTER X.

AFTER THE GUERRILLAS.

The Fairdale Blues had covered themselves with glory. They were certainly the lions of the hour.

General Grant sent for Jack Clark, and personally complimented him.

"Your brave dash turned the tide at a critical moment," he said. "I shall be glad to name you for promotion, Clark."

"Thank you," replied Jack, "but I could not accept."

"What? You refuse?"

"Yes, sir."

"On what grounds?"

"I prefer to stay with my company to the end of the war."

During the great battle, Jack had borne in mind fully the commission given him so delicately by Emily Blanchard, the planter's daughter.

He had made careful inquiry for Warren Claverly, but thus far he had been able to gain no trace of him.

But he learned that the muster rolls of the Confederates had fallen into the hands of the Union quartermaster-gen-

eral, so he applied to him for the privilege of examining them.

Carefully, he ran his eyes over the list, and finally found an entry on the roll of the Mississippi regiment:

"Warren Claverly, age 22, lieutenant."

It was now in order for Jack to learn the fate of this regiment. This he did not find difficult.

It had been almost cut to pieces in resisting the assault of the Federal forces in the first day's battle.

A few of its privates and two or three officers were under guard in the fort. Jack at once went to the latter.

Lieutenant Clayburn, of the First Mississippi, answered Jack's queries.

"Yes," he said, "Lieutenant Claverly was one of our best and bravest boys. I know he was in the first day's fight. What became of him, I do not know, but I fear he was killed."

"That is sad," said Jack.

"There are many sad things happening nowadays. Was he a friend of yours?"

"I was commissioned by a young woman whose heart was promised to him to look him up. The circumstances are unusually touching. As lovers, they parted in anger. She desires to atone for this, and has sent me to offer mediation."

The lieutenant's face grew grave.

"I fear that she will have to defer that to another life," he said.

"I fear so myself."

Jack now went again over the hospital list. He visited every cot, inquired the names of hundreds of patients, and even scanned their faces.

Outside the works were hundreds of hastily made graves.

It was not known who filled these, so it was safe to assume that Warren Claverly was among them.

Jack sat down to write a letter to Miss Blanchard, telling her of his strenuous efforts and of his failure to get trace of Claverly.

He spoke hopefully of the possibility that he had made his escape and would, in due time, turn up safely.

This letter he found means to send to the Blanchard plantation.

This was hardly off his hands, when an orderly made his appearance.

"General Grant would like to see you at his headquarters at once."

Jack sprang up, and instantly started for General Grant's tent.

When he arrived there, he found the great commander pacing up and down. There was a cloud upon his brow.

He did not look like a man who had just won a great victory. His mind was looking beyond that.

"Ah, Clark!" he said. "You are just the fellow I want to see. I have some work for you!"

"Good!" cried Jack. "I am very glad to know that!"

"This man, Forrest; you have had experience with him?"

"I know him well."

"Very well! He is a thorn in the flesh. None of my cavalry generals are able to cope with him. Gordon is too slow. This fellow, Forrest, can play all about him.

"Now, I have an idea, Clark, that you are the man I want for a certain undertaking I have in mind."

"I will gladly assume any task you may name," said Jack.

"Did you ever hear of Carl Scott?"

"He is the famous Missouri guerrilla."

"Yes."

"I have heard of him."

"Very good! Now, Scott has joined forces with Forrest. Scott has about two hundred men in his command.

"But they are all daredevils. They are fighters and hard riders. They can whip twice their number of dull-witted men. You know what I mean?"

"Yes, sir."

"Now, Clark, I think you can handle this fellow, Scott."

"You give me great credit, sir."

"Well, I think you deserve it. I am going to commission you to go after him. Last night, he cut off one of our supply trains under Lieutenant May, down here on the Dover road. He has May besieged in a hollow in the woods. Sixty thousand dollars' worth of supplies are held up there, and if Scott overcomes May they will be destroyed.

"In these days, when foodstuffs are so hard to get, that means much. Now, I am going to put you and your Blues into the saddle."

Jack's eyes flashed.

"It will not be our first experience, General Grant."

"I know. I feel sure that you will make it, my boy. I want you to go down there and fall upon Scott like a thunderbolt. Smite him hip and thigh, and cut him all to pieces. Capture him if you can. In any event, relieve May and the supply train."

"I will do so, general. Your orders shall be executed."

"I have given an order to the quartermaster-general to have you supplied with one hundred of the best horses belonging to the service. You will receive them in one hour, saddled and equipped. Sabres will be handed your men, and they can temporarily lay aside their muskets for carbines."

"Very well, sir."

"You see, I am compelled to do this on account of other work that is necessary for our cavalry. It is at all times a hazardous thing to mount infantry, but in the case of yourself and your Blues, I feel quite safe."

"We will do our best, general."

"I feel that you will."

Jack departed in high spirits. When he acquainted the Blues with the project, they were delighted.

Over a dozen of their number had been lost in that fearful charge up the steeps of Donelson, but Jack had recruited his ranks almost at once, a number of recruits arriving that day from Virginia, in response to a call he had made a week before.

So that the ranks of the Blues were full when they appeared for inspection that morning.

In an hour, as General Grant had ordered, horses, fully equipped, were brought to their camp.

They left their muskets stacked in their tents, and, taking the sabres and carbines, mounted, and were ready for the ride.

It was destined to be a dashing one also.

Jack Clark, who could ride like a Centaur, dashed forward on a fine thoroughbred. He looked every inch the captain, as he swung his sword aloft, and cried:

"Attention, Blues! We are in the saddle for a perilous trip. We shall have hard riding and harder fighting. But we will win distinction with the sabre, as we have with the musket. Every man is expected to do his duty. By the right flank! Forward! Quick trot! March!"

The Blues, with a cheer, spurred their horses forward. As they dashed out of the Union camp, they made a fine spectacle.

The men in the lines cheered them heartily. Soon they were beyond the lines and on their way to relieve the besieged Lieutenant May.

Jack Clark and Hal Martin rode in advance.

The two young officers were both dashing riders. For some miles they rode on.

At times they passed outposts and Union videttes. Nothing was to be seen of the Confederates.

It did not seem as if they had ever held forth in the vicinity. The victory of the Yankees had driven them away.

But soon the Blues entered a wild region, where there was no military occupation.

Soldiers could not be seen of either side. The region showed no signs of war or its minions.

Great forests of oak and walnut and sycamore were upon every hand. The roads were wet and slimy and muddy, hence progress was slow.

But after some miles of this sort of going the forests gave way to a rolling country.

There were small hills and wooded dells. A few native cabins were passed.

Some of these were occupied by blacks, and some by poor whites. They ran at sight of the soldiers in abject terror.

But suddenly, as the Blues reached the top of a little hill, Jack Clark heard a distant sound, which gave him a start.

It was the rattle of musketry.

And far in the distance a thin pall of blue smoke hung over the trees. It told the tale.

"There we are, boys!" he cried. "There is the work cut out for us!"

"Do you think it is May and his wagon train?" asked Hal.

"I do."

Forward galloped the Blues. It was now rapidly growing dark.

The air was still chill and drear, although the temperature was rising. The Blues bent forward in their saddles.

They knew the necessity of hard riding.

Perhaps May might be already surrendering to the guerrilla, Scott. Even a minute of time might turn the scale.

On and on they madly rode.

With sabres flashing and horses panting, they made a formidable spectacle on that country highway. Now at last they came upon the scene.

In the distance was the comprehensive spectacle. A group of wagons huddled on the side of a hill, white smoke rising over all.

Behind those wagons were determined, desperate men, fighting for their lives, for it was a tradition of Scott that he never gave quarter.

The guerrillas in lines surrounded the apparently doomed wagon train.

Jack Clark rose in his stirrups. The sight thrilled every one.

"Forward, Blues!" he shouted. "We must clear them away! Down with the guerrillas!"

"Hurrah! Hurrah!"

The Blues were seen by the guerrilla crew as they came dashing on. It seemed to create a commotion among them.

They were seen to change front in part. Those in the wagon train rose up and cheered in reply.

Jack, however, was not reckless. He did not send his men down in a headlong charge to receive the raking volleys of the foe. He swung his horse to the left and cried:

"Halt! Dismount and leave horses in guard! Deploy right and left!"

In an instant the order was obeyed.

The Blues flung themselves from their horses. They quickly deployed and crept forward under cover, using their carbines with deadly effect.

The result was soon apparent.

Scott's line was compelled to change front and break. It withdrew before the wagon train, so that it was no longer surrounded.

Lieutenant May's brave boys now in turn made a rally. The guerrillas were driven back to the base of a high hill, while Jack Clark and his Blues mounted and rode down to join the besieged.

CHAPTER XI.

GENERAL FORREST ONCE MORE.

It is hardly necessary to say that those battle-worn, jaded and dispirited defenders of the wagon train were indeed glad to see the Blues. They knew it was their salvation.

Though they had been fighting with success so far as holding the enemy at bay was concerned, yet they knew that they must succumb in the end.

But though the wagon train was relieved and reinforced, the end was not yet.

The guerrillas came quickly back to the attack.

Jack Clark, however, did not intend that they should surround him as they had May.

He deployed his men so as to make as long a line as Scott had. Any flank movement on the guerrillas' part was met with a desperate drive at Scott's centre.

So that he was compelled to draw back his men to keep his force from being cut in two, which is the most fatal thing that can happen on a battlefield.

The tactics shown by the boy captain were of the most brilliant sort, and quite disconcerted the wily Scott.

"I thought I was fighting with Grant himself," he said afterward. "I did not know where I was exactly, at any time."

Darkness was now at hand.

Both sides knew the uselessness of conducting the struggle after the sun went down, so they drew off and went into camp.

Pickets were posted within speaking distance of the enemy.

Thus both sides rested upon their arms. It is hardly necessary to say that Lieutenant May was delighted with the fact that he had been reinforced.

"We were just on the point of abandoning the struggle," he said. "Some of our best men had been shot. The foe were preparing to rush us."

"I am indeed glad that I came in good time," said Jack.

"And we are glad also. By the way, what is Grant's next move?"

"I cannot exactly say."

"Now that he has captured Donelson, I suppose he will chase the Confederates out of Tennessee."

"I believe he will try that. I have heard that the foe were in strength near Corinth. It is possible that he will strike out in that direction."

"Indeed!" said the lieutenant. "I hope we shall be able to extricate ourselves from this scrape and go with him."

"We will try."

Just then Hal Martin came into Lieutenant May's tent, where Jack was talking with him at the moment, and saluted.

"Captain, I have bad news!"

"Ah!" exclaimed Jack. "What is it?"

"Scott has received reinforcements. We are faced by overwhelming numbers."

Lieutenant May gave an exclamation of dismay, but Jack's face showed nothing of his true sentiments.

"Ah!" he said, quietly. "Very fortunate for Scott!"

"Yes!" said May.

"If he had not received them, on the morrow we would have whipped him out of his boots."

May arose anxiously.

"What shall we do in the face of this new exigency?" he asked. "Oh, it is hard to give up now and surrender!"

"Surrender!" exclaimed Jack.

"Yes. There can be no other recourse. Such reinforcement only means our extermination if we resist."

"Lieutenant May, you astonish me!"

"How so?" asked the lieutenant.

"I give you credit for being a brave man, and for having fought the gamest battle of this campaign. That you should give in now and think of surrender is a great surprise to me."

"But, Captain Clark, you have not stood for forty-eight hours behind these old wagons and seen your choicest men sicken and die like flies beneath the storm of the enemy's bullets. It is not fear that impels me to consider surrender, but feeling for my men."

"How much better off will they be?" asked the young captain. "What worse fate than the Southern prison pens? I say, better death with one's face to the foe."

"Speaking of myself, I agree with you," said May, "but there are other souls to consider. Life is dear to all, yet I have no desire to surrender if there can be any assurance whatever of escape."

"We don't want any assurance of escape," said Jack.

"Lieutenant May, let Scott have all the reinforcements he can get. Let Forrest's whole horde come down to his aid. We must and will whip them."

May stared at the young captain.

"Clark," he said, "you have more courage, I fear, than wisdom."

At this Jack laughed.

"You are candid," he said.

"Well, you will forgive me, but to me the case looks quite hopeless."

"That is because you are weary of fighting and a bit discouraged. Lieutenant Martin, who has brought this news of the reinforcements?"

"An old scout, sir. His name is Sanders."

"Sanders!" Jack gave a great start. "Show him in here, Hal!"

"All right, sir."

Lieutenant May showed interest. A moment later Sanders, the brave old scout, entered the tent.

He saluted Jack, who turned to May and said:

"This is Sanders, one of General Grant's best and most trusted scouts. Sanders, what story do you bring us now?"

"I have just come from Dover," replied the scout. "I have been following up Forrest. I learned a few hours ago that he was near Dover, and that his lieutenant, Scott, had sent for him to help round up a wagon train."

"I at once set out ahead of the guerrilla column, and arrived here just in advance of him. He is by this time with Scott."

"You speak of Forrest?" asked Jack.

"Yes."

The young captain was startled. He knew that if Forrest had come down with his command their fate was sealed unless they could make a counter move.

Just what this might be, he could not yet say. He looked at Sanders, reflectively.

"How many men has Forrest with him?" he asked.

"A detachment of fully two thousand."

"Whew!" exclaimed Lieutenant May. "Ten to one! We can hardly scrape up two hundred!"

"It looks bad," admitted Jack. "You say Forrest just arrived, Sanders?"

"Yes."

"All right. Lieutenant Martin, call out the Blues. Put every man in saddle."

May gave a start.

"What is this?" he cried.

"I am going to act," said Jack.

"What do you mean?"

"Just what I say. There is not a moment to lose. I have met Forrest before. He is a man of quick moves. To beat such a man, it is simply necessary to move quicker. That is all."

"You are going to leave us here to our fate?"

"Lieutenant May, you are a brave man," said Jack. "It is only necessary for you to be calm. I propose to strike before Forrest gets a chance. That is all."

"But—what is your plan?"

"Just this. I am going to save you and your wagon train."

"How can you do that?"

"A quick move and a sharp dash. I believe it will be easy."

"I don't understand you."

"Well, I will be plainer. Now, May, you have lost half your force?"

"Yes. I have hardly one hundred men left of my command. The teamsters are hiding under their wagons. They have not the nerve to fight."

"Rout them out then, and put every man on his wagon seat. Let every horse available be hitched to your wagons. My plan is this: Of course, Scott would not attack on even terms until daybreak.

"But he has now more than ten times our number. It is safe for him to attack at night. Undoubtedly Forrest will advise him to at once move upon us. Now we must be ready for him.

"I shall ride out of here with the Blues to the west. His line does not extend in that direction. In an hour I will have passed completely around the enemy and be in the rear.

"I shall make a swift dash upon their camp. Of course, I will be repulsed. But I will continue these dashes. They will be puzzled to know what it means. They will not know who I am or how large my force is.

"Nothing so demoralizes a force as to be attacked in the rear. The result will be probably what I desire. Their full attention will be distracted from you and your camp. Put half your force out there on the firing line. Let them keep up a hot fire.

"Rush your wagons out by the rear to the Dover turnpike. Let the drivers not spare the lash. In a few hours' time those supplies can all be so near our lines that Forrest will not venture to go after them. Then you can fall back into the woods. Sanders will guide you. It will be easy enough to keep up an orderly retreat all the way to our lines. We will then have given Forrest a hot fight and saved the train."

The simplicity of the plan, as well as its extreme plausi-

bility, held May spellbound. He gazed at Jack with unconcealed wonderment and admiration.

"On my honor," he said finally, "Captain Jack Clark, you are a born general. I never would have thought of so brilliant a plan."

"Of course, all depends upon its execution," said Jack. "It must be well executed."

"I understand. So far as my part goes, it shall be well done."

"I feel sure of that. Are you ready to act, lieutenant?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very good! Sanders, I will ask you to stay with Lieutenant May, and aid him all you can."

"I will do so, sir," replied the scout.

"Very good! I will wish you au revoir!"

Jack saluted and left the tent. His orders to Hal had been promptly obeyed. The Blues were all in saddle.

Jack sprang into saddle and gave the word:

"Forward! Quick trot! March!"

Away went the dashing little company, and soon they were riding through the darkness and into the woods.

Jack knew that it was a long detour to get around the flank of Forrest's forces, but yet they were not as fully extended as they would be in another day, or even a few hours.

On they dashed through the wild country. They forded streams, leaped fallen trees, cut across fields, floundered in mire, and once lost their bearings.

But, as Jack had promised, in one hour they made the ride.

They were upon the lower end of the Dover road, and exactly in the rear of the forces of Forrest.

It seemed like an absurd undertaking for a small company of one hundred men to attack two thousand.

In the daylight, Jack would hardly have ventured it, but he knew that the darkness would favor him greatly.

He drew his little command up in the shadows of a little clump of trees.

The men dismounted and cast themselves upon the ground while the horses breathed. But in half an hour Jack sprang up and cried:

"To saddle, Blues! Every man must be ready for a hard ride!"

The Blues responded instantly. They sprang into the saddle.

Jack drew his sabre and rode in front of them. They sprang away toward the distant lights, which told them where were the enemy's lines.

On they rode at full tilt. Nearer they drew to the foe. Suddenly a sharp hail was heard:

"Halt! Who goes there!"

But no rein was drawn. The frightened picket fired his gun and fled out of the path of the Blues.

Now the riders saw the tents and camp fires, and saw the men in gray madly rushing to arms.

CHAPTER XII.

WHICH ENDS THE TALE.

Straight down into Forrest's camp rode the Blues. A moment more, and they were right in among the camp fires, shooting and slashing right and left.

Jack was not foolish enough to stand his ground and give battle.

He knew that it was wiser to strike and get away and live to strike again.

So the Blues swerved and dashed out again. On the way, they came upon scores of the raiders' horses.

These were dexterously freed and put to flight. Then the daring little company was outside the foe's lines again.

The effect upon the raiders was most startling.

Drums beat, men rushed into line, and all was confusion.

Had Jack possessed a few hundred men, he could have wiped out the whole encampment with ease.

But with half their horses stampeded, a score of their men sabred and the camp in confusion, the Confederate raiders had their hands full.

But the Blues had not escaped without paying a penalty for their daring.

Several of the brave boys lay dead inside the enemy's lines. They had given their lives bravely for a good cause.

Jack once more made a dash for Forrest's flank.

But the Confederates were now prepared, and the wily young captain drew off, and, dismounting his men, deployed them in line of battle.

Of course, Forrest gave his whole attention to this rear attack from a foe whose strength he could only guess.

The result was just as Jack had so skilfully planned. The wagon train slipped out of the trap in which it had been so long.

May's men engaged the guerrillas on his front, and for hours the desultory fight in the dark went on.

It was impossible for Forrest or his men to tell just where the Blues were, for Jack kept changing his base, opening up the fight at some new and unexpected point.

And thus the night hours passed.

In the meantime, assured of the safety of the wagon train, May withdrew slowly, and soon was himself safe beyond pursuit, on his way to the Union lines at Donelson.

Jack, just before daybreak, mounted his men and rode

away in desperate haste. He had accomplished his object and the mission upon which he had been sent.

And this was enough.

He had not the force with which to give battle to Forrest and his cavalry. He had performed a daring feat.

The Blues were pursued for some miles in the early morning light by the baffled and infuriated Confederate cavalymen.

But he easily eluded them, and soon was safe beyond their reach. The Blues had been compelled to make a long detour, and now, as they rode on, the country became familiar to Jack.

He recognized the broad fields of the Blanchard plantation.

Jack experienced a strange thrill, and up to his gaze came clearly the beautiful face of the young Southern girl.

He hesitated but a moment, and then decided to halt. He turned to the boys, and said:

"Halt! Prepare to bivouac!"

It was a welcome order.

The Blues had been long in the saddle. They were not hardened troopers, and the ride had begun to tell upon them.

Moreover, the loss of sleep was a factor not to be disregarded. They were now safe from any possible attack of the enemy, and this was the best place for them to rest.

So they dismounted in sight of the great plantation house. When the horses were tethered and the camp fires built, Jack said to Hal.

"Wait here, Hal! Take charge of the camp until I return."

"All right, captain!" And the young lieutenant's eye twinkled. "What will Miss Prentiss say?"

Jack smiled broadly.

"You are too sharp, Hal. But then, you know, Miss Nell and I are foes."

"Figuratively speaking."

"Yes. I will agree to that. But expect me back soon, Hal. The young woman gave me a commission to execute and I must report."

"Oh!" exclaimed Hal, with a frown. "Does it concern her lover? You said something about it once."

"It does," replied Jack, with a start. "Did I tell you about it?"

"I think so! They parted in a quarrel. She is anxious to become reconciled. He has gone into battle to throw his life away, and so forth!"

"I say, Hal, I am not so sure but that he has done so."

"Eh! What do you mean?"

"I mean this is more of a tragedy than a comedy. He

was Warren Claverly, of the First Mississippi. That regiment was almost wiped out. He is not among the survivors. He is among the missing."

"The deuce! The girl's heart will break!"

"Yes, for I know that she loves him well."

"Well," said Hal, with a shrug, "I have always said that the lucky man is heart and fancy free."

"Like myself."

"You, you rogue!" laughed Hal. "You know that your heart is all bound up in that fair little rebel down in old Virginia, charming Nellie Prentiss, the sister of your old chum, Will Prentiss."

Something like a sigh welled from Jack Clark's bosom. His eyes took on a far-away expression, and he walked away.

Jack knew almost before he reached the Blanchard house that something unusual had happened.

A carriage stood before the door. A man of austere presence stood on the porch, buttoning his gloves.

He glanced at Jack, and then, with a nod, sprang into the carriage, and was driven away.

Jack stood, looking after the carriage reflectively.

"Well, now," he muttered, "I'll stake my life that man is a doctor. There's something wrong. Perhaps my erstwhile charming hostess is ill."

He ascended the steps and reached the door.

Then he halted.

It seemed as if some great hand was holding him back. He could go no farther.

He stood there with a very strange sensation creeping over him. Then an incident occurred.

A figure appeared in the open door. Jack stood and gazed at Emily Blanchard, the planter's daughter. He could hardly believe his eyes.

She was dressed in a dainty robe of black and white. It showed her graceful figure to advantage. She was beautiful beyond compare.

But how ghostly white! She was like a beautiful marble statue.

"Miss Blanchard!" exclaimed Jack. "What is the matter? You—are you ill?"

She did not reply, but placed one hand over her heart. With the other she beckoned him.

Like one in a dream, Jack followed.

She led the way through the grand old Southern hall, with its white balustrade, its balcony, and its soft light. She led him into an inner room.

An air of sanctity pervaded that room. The boy captain felt it even before he saw the cot, upon which lay a silent figure, whiter and colder than the pallor of the girl.

The eyes were closed. The figure was manly and straight. The features were classic and handsome, it seemed doubly so in death.

Warren Claverly, the young lieutenant of the First Mississippi, lay there before him, as Jack did not need to ask. He gazed with a numb sense of sorrow upon the corpse of this noble youth, whose life had been but a sacrifice.

For some moments there was silence. Jack gazed upon the dead, and then raised his eyes to the expressionless face of the stricken girl, whose heart would be laid in the grave with this cold clay.

She beckoned him again, and he followed her to the porch.

"You see," she said, in a voice which seemed tomblike. "You understand. I found him—God helped me to do so—on the field at Donelson. I brought him here. God answered my prayer, and he knew me before he died. My life is closed. I know that you understand."

Jack bowed, and said:

"Words of sympathy are a mockery at this moment, Miss Blanchard. I pray God may give you strength to bear your burden." Then he walked away.

"What's the matter, pard?" asked Hal Martin in amazement, as Jack reappeared in the camp of the Blues. "You look like a walking ghost."

"Do I?" said Jack, with a deep breath. "Well, I ought to. I have been down to the gates of Inferno. Human sorrow is something beyond human comprehension. I tell you I feel like throwing up my commission and hieing me to some vast wilderness, where the curse and the horrors of war are not known."

"Pshaw! Take a bracer, old man! You are losing your nerve!"

But Jack Clark's mind held that gruesome picture in the parlor of the planter's house for many a day to come.

The Blues bivouacked on the spot until the following day.

Then once more they were in the saddle, and on their way back to Donelson. When finally they rode into the Union camp, Jack dropped from his horse and went to Grant's quarters to report.

The great commander did an unusual thing.

He relaxed from his usual sphinx-like attitude, and, springing up, grasped the boy captain's hand.

"You've made your mark, Clark!" he cried. "You have done the biggest thing of the whole campaign!"

"You surprise me," said Jack.

"Do I? See here, McClelland!" The tall general advanced and regarded Jack with interest.

"This is Captain Clark, of the Fairdale Blues. He is

the only man who has given Forrest a rebuff. He has slapped his face right and left, and beaten him in every encounter."

"I congratulate you, Clark," said McClernand, warmly. "We consider Forrest the toughest proposition in the Confederate army."

"Maybe he is," said General Grant, "but he is easy for Clark. I'll bet a new hat that, put he and Clark in a field with even forces, Clark will whip him out of his boots."

"I think that Captain Clark is in line for promotion, General Grant."

"But he's so very modest he won't accept it. I don't blame you, Clark. The life and duties of a captain are freer from the jealous criticisms and humiliations of a general's life. You are far happier than any of us, and serve your country just as well."

"I thank you," replied Jack, "but I think you do me too much honor."

"Do I?" chuckled General Grant. "Well, be prepared to receive more of it. We are going to carry this campaign to the enemy's stronghold at Corinth. You will find that I shall call upon you with confidence on the way thither."

"I can assure you that it will be the greatest honor you can pay me," said Jack, earnestly. "The Blues desire to be always at the front."

"Always at the front?" said McClernand. "That is a good motto. I wish you success always, Captain Clark."

"I reciprocate the sentiment, general," replied Jack.

General Grant now turned to his table.

"Let me see," he said. "Lieutenant May's wagon train is reported safe. That means a large saving of supplies and food for thousands of our hungry boys. Here is a telegram from President Lincoln, Clark. You may read it."

With a thrill, Jack took it. He read as follows:

"Executive Mansion, Washington, D. C.,

"February 16, 1862.

"My Dear General: I congratulate you again upon your superb victory at Donelson. The work of Captain Clark and his Fairdale Blues, as described by you, pleases me much. I know the young man's father well, and he is of the stuff of which heroes is made. Again congratulating you, I remain.

A. LINCOLN."

Jack's nerves tingled. For a moment he could not speak. Both generals were looking at him with interest.

Finally, he managed to stammer:

"It is quite undeserved. President Lincoln's sentiments are very kind."

"My boy," said Grant, as Jack handed him the telegram,

"as that message pertains almost wholly to you, you may keep it."

And Jack did so. In after years, that precious message from the greatest and noblest of all our Presidents hung in an appropriate frame in his room.

Jack went back to his comrades and told them all. It is needless to say that the Blues were much pleased at such great appreciation of their work.

"Well," cried Hal Martin, with exuberance of spirit, "I don't see but what we'll all be heroes some day, and wear laurel wreaths of fame. I think we'd better stick to the soldiers' trade, fellows."

"The pay is small but the earnings are large," said Tom Peters, in an ambiguous way.

The Blues were in such fine spirits that they held a celebration in their barracks at the fort that night.

They sang lively songs, made speeches, and vowed all sorts of dire things against Forrest. It was high jinks until well into the morning hours.

But the next day an orderly appeared at Jack's door.

"Captain Clark?"

"Yes, sir!"

"General Grant wants to see you at his headquarters."

Jack responded at once, of course. He was closeted with the great commander for over an hour.

When the boy captain emerged, his step was light but his face serious.

As Hal Martin met him on his return, the blithe lieutenant said:

"Your face looks like a dried apple, captain. What is the matter?"

"Good news," replied Jack, "although it is serious also. We are ordered to leave Donelson on a long march at once."

"Hooray!" cried Hal. "I was just beginning to feel rusty."

The rest of the boys were delighted with the news. At once preparations were made for the new expedition.

What it brought forth, and all its thrilling features, we will depict in a future story.

THE END.

Read "HELD AT BAY; OR, THE BOYS IN GRAY BAFLED," which will be the next number (11) of "Blue and Gray Weekly."

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- " " THE LIBERTY BOYS OF '76, Nos.....
- " " BLUE AND GRAY WEEKLY, Nos.....
- " " Ten-Cent Hand Books, Nos.....

Name.....Street and No.....Town.....State.....